

Understanding Youth Perspectives: Opportunities for Civic Engagement in the Thermi Youth Council

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WPI



Opportunities for Engagement in the Thermi Youth Council

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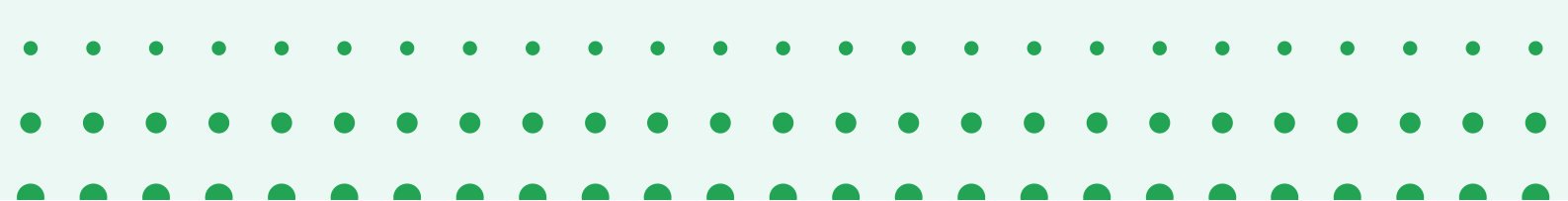
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Abstract

Working with the Directorate of Social and Educational Policy in Themi, Greece, our team determined the interests and concerns of Themi youth to identify opportunities for broader civic youth engagement and increased participation in the Themi Youth Council. Through interviews, surveys, and activities with 122 Themi youth, we explored their interests, commitments, and concerns. Our findings indicate that the youth council's strong relationship with the municipality may deter new members because of negative perceptions of the Greek bureaucracy. We also suggest promotional events and programs the council can organize to encourage youth engagement and participation with the organization.



Executive Summary

Background

In 2007, the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market and bankruptcy of powerful financial institutions in the United States launched Greece into long-term economic turmoil (Kondilis, 2013). Thirteen years later, the lack of jobs and opportunities along with the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a resurgence of Greek youth participation in socio-political resistance and protests.

Youth councils offer a platform for young people to voice their opinions, advocate for change, and learn valuable life skills (Cicognani, E. et al, 2015). When these groups use sociocracy, a self-governance method based on consensus, each member has equal voting power and no single member can dictate the agenda of the organization (“Sociocracy for all”, 2021).

Youth organizations associated with municipal governments may be more successful if they have coordinated recruitment, clearly fulfill a purpose, and have adult mentors (Collins, 2016). To better recruit local youth [VD1], Thomas (2009) recommends that municipalities use modern forms of communication and request that trusted adults promote the youth council (Blanchet-Cohen, 2015). Additionally, adult mentors should grant youth the maximum autonomy possible by allowing them to focus on concerns relevant and of interest to them (Ausberger, 2017).

This project focuses on the Youth Council of the Municipality of Thermi, which was formed in May of 2020 to give youth a platform for civic engagement, especially in the current economic and social conditions. The council follows a sociocratic model and is the only youth council to do so in Greece. Some examples of their previous projects include volunteer cleanups, planting trees, and hosting a culture festival (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023). The Youth Council was very active in its early stages, but as pandemic restrictions were lifted, interest in the council declined for reasons that remain unclear.

Our Approach

The goal of this project is to determine the interests and concerns of Thermi youth to identify opportunities for broader civic youth engagement. We interviewed members of the youth council to understand the views of current and past youth council members regarding the operations of the youth council, what they have enjoyed about their experience, as well as their thoughts on the source of the recent decline in membership and engagement.

To explore youth interests in Thermi, we interviewed 16 young people in the target age group of the council about their everyday experiences and attitudes towards the council. We also visited a high school and technical college in Thermi. Students at these schools participated in Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) activities where they created artifacts to help them discuss their hobbies, their daily annoyances, and what it's like to live in Thermi. During these school visits 104 students filled out a mobile survey exploring the same topics.

Findings

The youth council faces obstacles when trying to recruit new members because of opposition from schools and a lack of initiative from council members.

A recurring theme in our interviews was the limited promotion and recruitment conducted by the Thermi Youth Council. This is a result of external obstacles and a lack of initiative from council members. The youth council faces significant opposition from principals and teachers' unions when they attempt to visit local high schools; however, many of the original members of the council were introduced to it through high school promotional visits or an open call. In the years since the initial promotion, visits were only made to one high school, and no open calls were made. The limited outreach to Thermi youth was apparent in our interviews in Thermi Square. Only two out of sixteen interviewees in the council's target age group had heard of the council (Figure 1).

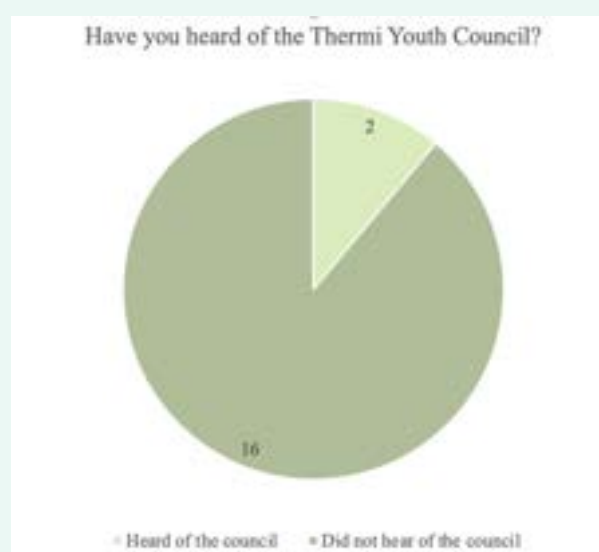


Figure 1: Interview responses to the question "Have you heard of the Thermi Youth Council?"

The youth council's strong relationship with the Municipality of Thermi may deter new members from joining.

The Thermi Youth Council's close affiliation with the municipality may deter new members from joining because of the widespread mistrust of the government in Thermi. Students asserted that they believe the government does not listen to people's concerns, and there was a sense of helplessness among the youth regarding politics, leading to the idea that the youth do not want to be associated with a government they believe does not value their concerns.

It's really hard to trust things like [the youth council and municipality] ... here, usually, people try to take advantage of the system and its people, and it can end up really bad

INTERVIEWEE, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, MARCH 24, 2023

The youth council can attract members with new events.

The event options shown in Figure 2 have all been executed by the youth council, and the indicated interest reflects the actual attendance at these events. Additionally, the events that stood out to our key informants as the most successful had the highest indicated interest from the general youth population, apart from the youth forum. Figures 3 and 4 explore youth interest in events that have not been previously put on by the youth council and are intended to determine areas of expansion for the council.

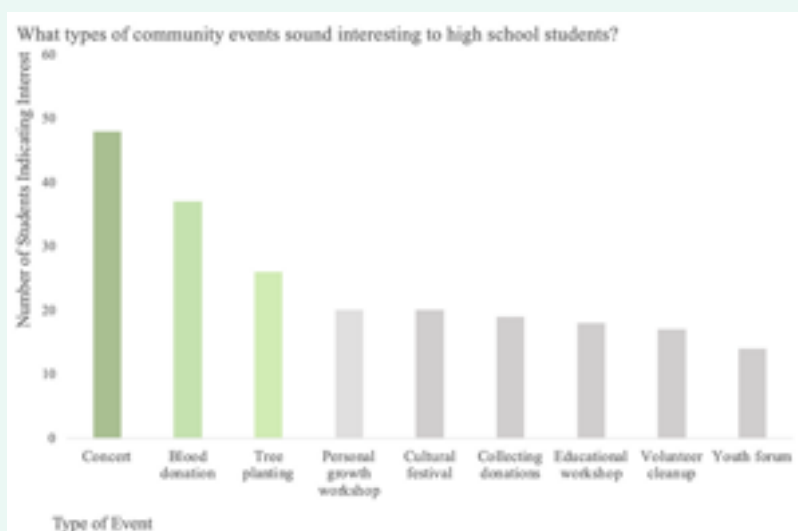


Figure 2: High school student responses to the question "What type of community events sound interesting to you?"

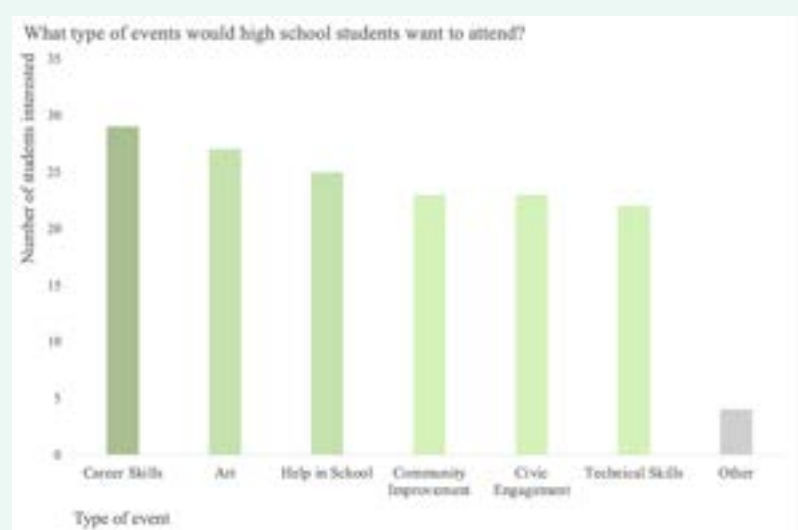


Figure 3: High school student responses to the question "What type of events would you want to attend?"

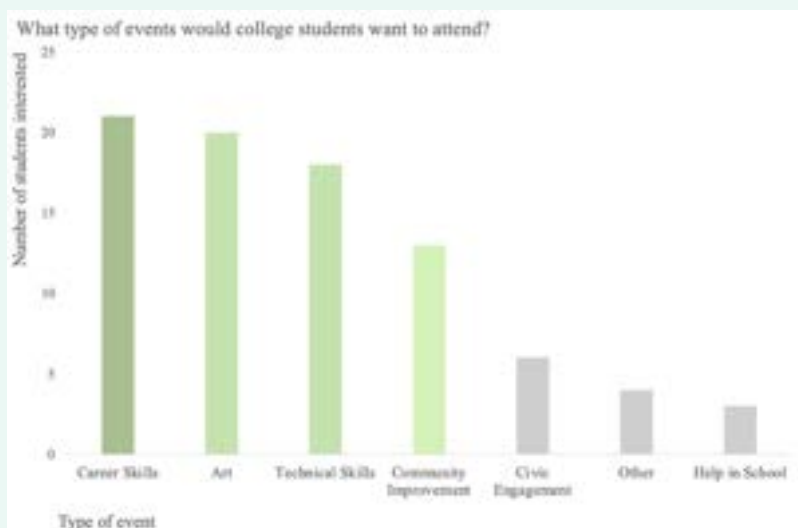


Figure 4: College student responses to the question "What type of events would you want to attend?"

Recommendations

- 1 Advertise the Thermi Youth Council to local youth**
Expected Outcome:
More youth will know about the council and may be interested in joining.
- 2 Create a youth council position responsible for recruitment**
Expected Outcome:
Recruitment will be the focus of one youth council member so advisors or members with current roles will not need to spread themselves between many responsibilities.
- 3 Create committees in the youth council based on area of interest**
Expected Outcome:
This would allow youth council members to focus on their interests and lessen the time commitment needed to have every member involved in planning every event.
- 4 Incorporate interests of young people into youth council events**
Expected Outcome:
Youth would be more likely to participate in activities they're interested in.
This would separate the council further from the government.
- 5 Host more career skills workshops for the youth**
Expected Outcome:
More students will have skills needed to get a job and more people would attend as interest was very high.



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Meet the Team

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Hi, I'm Abbie and I am a third year student majoring in actuarial mathematics at WPI. During my 7 weeks in Greece, I have loved meeting so many new people and learning about Greek culture. I am so glad I got the chance to work on such a unique and involved project.



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Hi I'm Mikaela! I'm a third year student majoring in computer science and data science. In my free time I like to cook and practice yoga. My favorite part of this project was meeting so many people around my age in Greece.



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Hi, I'm Erika, a fourth year student majoring in aerospace engineering at WPI. I'm also working towards my Master's in mechanical engineering. I have loved the scenic views and the people I have encountered over the past 7 weeks. This experience has introduced me to Greece's beauty and culture and I am beyond grateful for this opportunity and project.



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Recommendations & Conclusions	
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Conclusions	Ryan Powers

All sections were edited by all authors

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- 02** Background
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Introduction

Young people in Greece have been disproportionately affected by the severe austerity measures implemented by the Greek government in 2010. These measures were an attempt to reduce Greece's spending to repay their debt to the European Union and the International Monetary Fund following the economic crisis two years prior. Public spending cuts, high unemployment rates, high underemployment rates, and a lack of access to public health services followed, perpetuating the hardships in Greece. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have further exacerbated these issues. In response to the challenges faced by youth, municipalities in Greece have encouraged the development of youth councils which offer opportunities for youth to develop professional skills, connect with peers, and make an impact within their community (Cicognani, E. et al, 2015).

In May 2020, the municipality of Thermi created the Thermi Youth Council to help its young people navigate the current economic and social conditions that have led to feelings of isolation, apathy, and helplessness. The Municipality of Thermi wants to empower its youth and provide them with a platform to take actions on important community matters by submitting project proposals to municipal officials. The youth council remained very active through online and in-person meetings for the first few years after its launch. Following the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, membership and participation decreased greatly for unknown reasons. The youth council and its sponsoring department, the Thermi Directorate of Social and Educational Policy, want to understand the reason for this disengagement.

The goal of our project is to determine the interests and concerns of Thermi youth to identify opportunities for broader civic youth engagement. We hope to accomplish this through the following objectives:

- Identify the motivations, actions, and perspectives of the Municipality of Thermi with relation to the Thermi Youth Council.
- Assess perspectives of current youth council members regarding Thermi Youth Council operations.
- Determine engagement opportunities for the youth council based on the interests, commitments, and challenges of the youth in Thermi.
- Present data and facilitate discussion about possible solutions

We conducted interviews and activities, incorporating the ideals of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) methods, to better understand the interest, commitments, and concerns of the youth in Thermi. We presented the results to the youth council and its advisors, then prompted discussion to develop pathways to increase and sustain engagement in the youth council among Thermi youth.



Background

Greek Youth Amid Crisis

In 2007, the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market and bankruptcy of powerful financial institutions in the United States launched Greece into economic turmoil (Kondilis, 2013). From 2008 to 2014, Greece experienced a 29% drop in its gross domestic product (GDP), while unemployment rates reached 26.5%, underemployment rates hit approximately 30%, and long-term unemployment increased to 19.5% (Karanikolos, 2016).

In 2010, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Union (EU) approved Greece's request for an Economic Adjustment Program (EAP) by forcing a three-year policy of austerity and strict fiscal discipline in exchange for billions of dollars in loans to repay EU creditors (Revuelta, 2021). This resulted in public spending cuts, high tax rates, budget and salary cuts, pension cuts, and changes to working conditions in addition to the high unemployment rates noted above (Koulouris, 2014). The first EAP was followed by two additional bailouts from EU institutions calling for additional austerity measures resulting in a 36% reduction of public expenditures from 2009 to 2014 (Karanikolos, 2016), which eventually grew to a 60% cut to the public and private health sectors from 2009 to 2018 (Papadimos, 2020).

The people of Greece began losing trust in the government as their actions seemed fragmented, isolated, and failed to address the problems and concerns of Greek citizens (Maris, 2022). Greeks strongly opposed reform attempts, resulting in backlash, protests, and a surge in emigration from Greece.

Economic Crisis' Effect on Greek Youth

Although the economic crisis has had devastating impacts on Greece as a whole, it has affected Greek youth to a greater extent. Figures 5 and 6 below reflect the differences in unemployment rates for youth and overall populations in Greece (Greece unemployment rate 2023 & Employment Data, 2023). The steep increase in unemployment rates after 2010 reflect the consequences of the austerity policies, yet there is a notable difference between the overall and youth rates, revealing the drastic effects these economic conditions had on the youth.

The lack of jobs and opportunities is associated with a "Degree of Despair," referring to an absence of secure employment possibilities leading to higher levels of poverty, social vulnerability, and uncertainty ("The Degree of Despair," 2021). Youth underemployment rates also contribute to this despair – many young people in Greece unwillingly work at low-skill and low-paying jobs that do not utilize their level of education because full-time jobs using their skills are unavailable or given to people with more experience (Chen, 2022). As seen in Figure 7, the youth in Greece are at a much higher risk of financial insecurity than the total population. With the increase in precarious forms of employment, such as seasonal or part-time jobs, and challenges finding work related to specific educational skills, many young people emigrated to other EU countries (Pratsinakis, 2022).

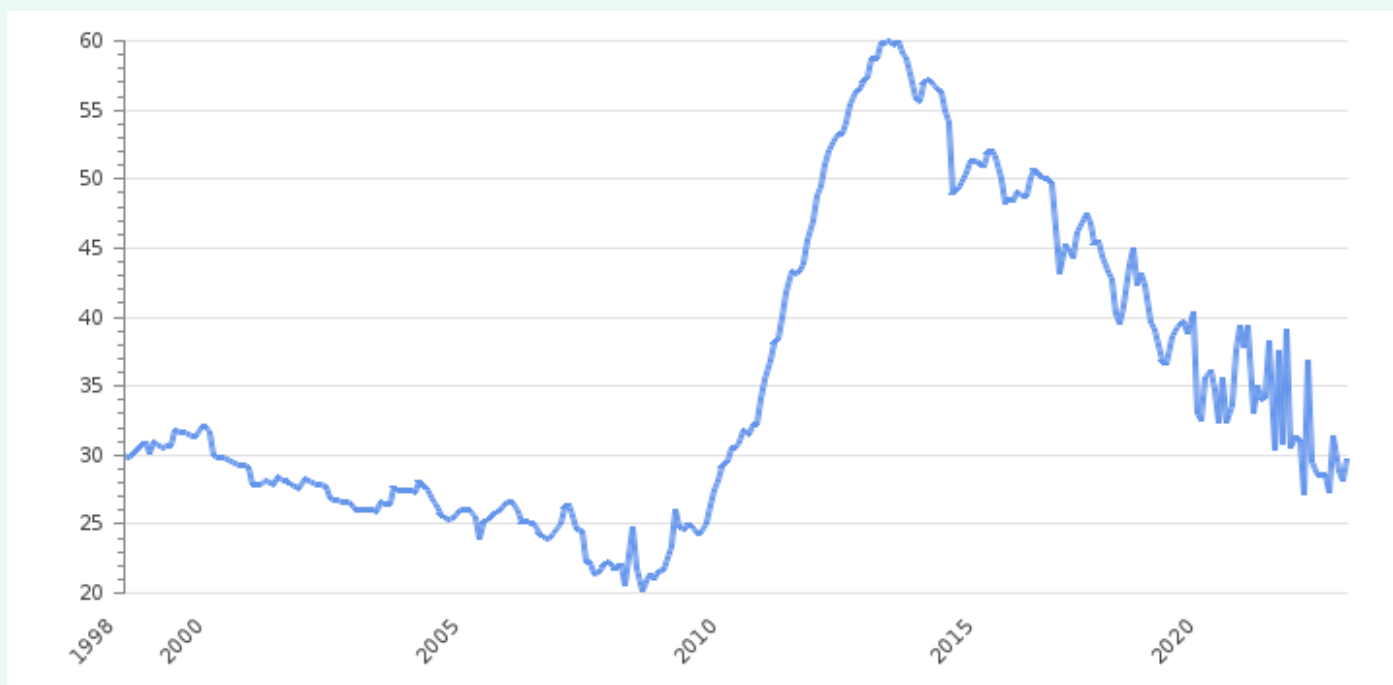


Figure 5: Youth Unemployment in Greece (Greece unemployment 2023 & European Data)

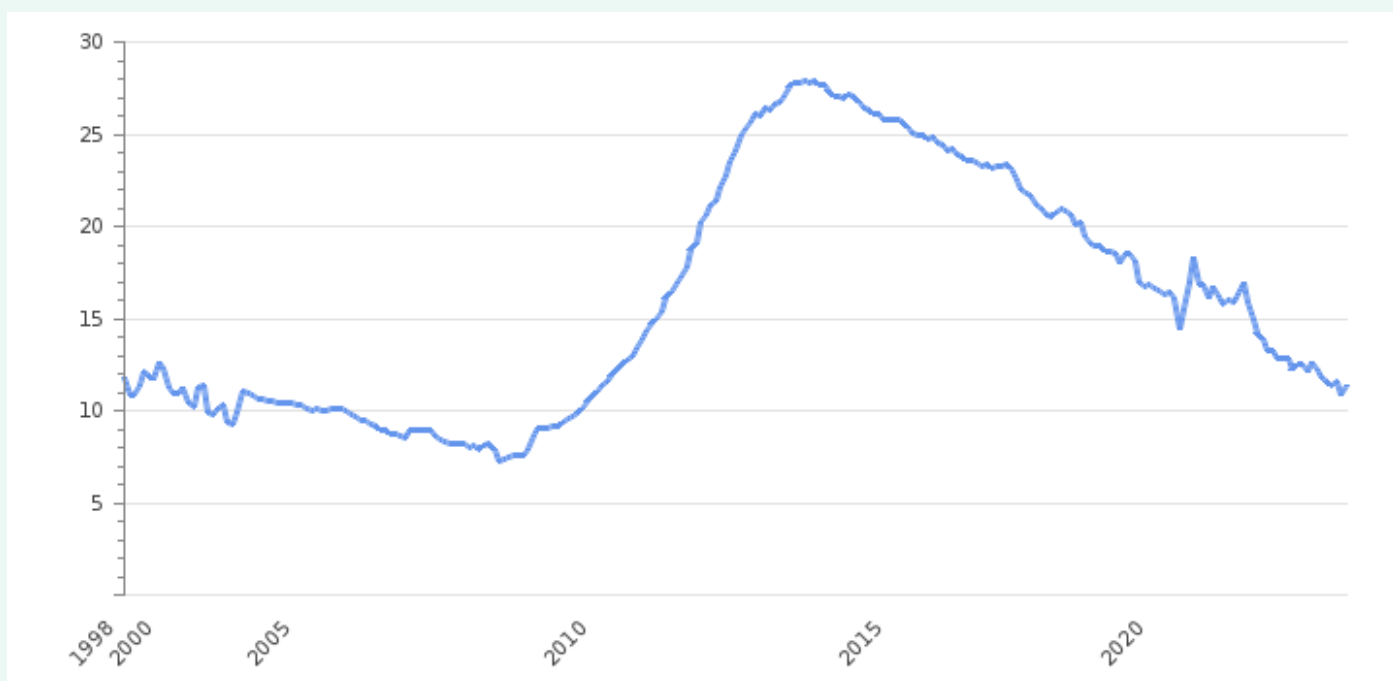


Figure 6: Overall Unemployment Rates in Greece (Greece unemployment rate 2023 & Employment Data, 2023)

According to Manolis Pratsinakis, Assistant Professor in social geography at Harokopio University, "most post-2010 emigrants left Greece due to a perception of a depressing lack of prospects in their home country and a deep-felt disappointment in the socioeconomic environment in Greece" (Pratsinakis, 2022).

Figure 8 shows the steep decline in Greek youth population following the effects of the economic crisis. The increase in overall precarity directly correlates to the risk of poverty, feelings of social exclusion, and fears of insecurity, which arose because of the economic struggles.

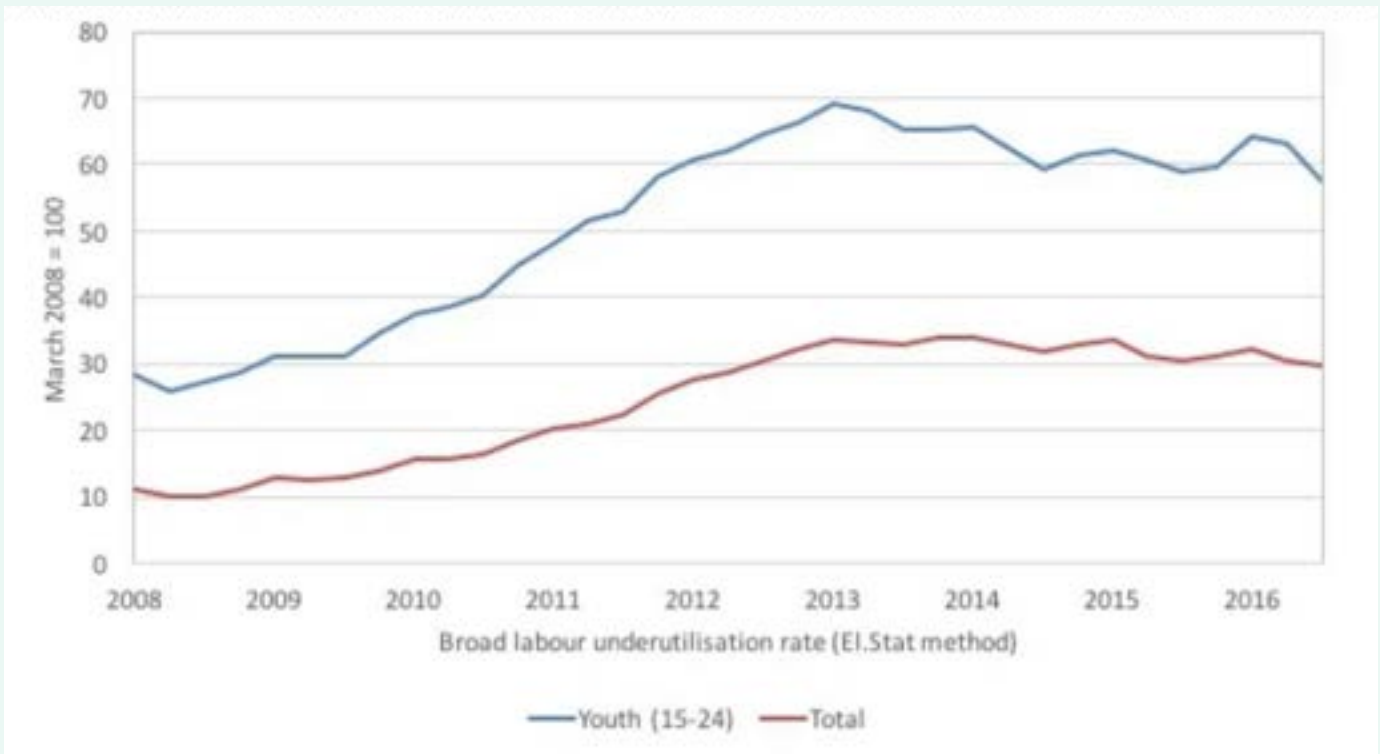


Figure 7: Total and Youth Underemployment Rates in Greece (Mitchell, 2017)

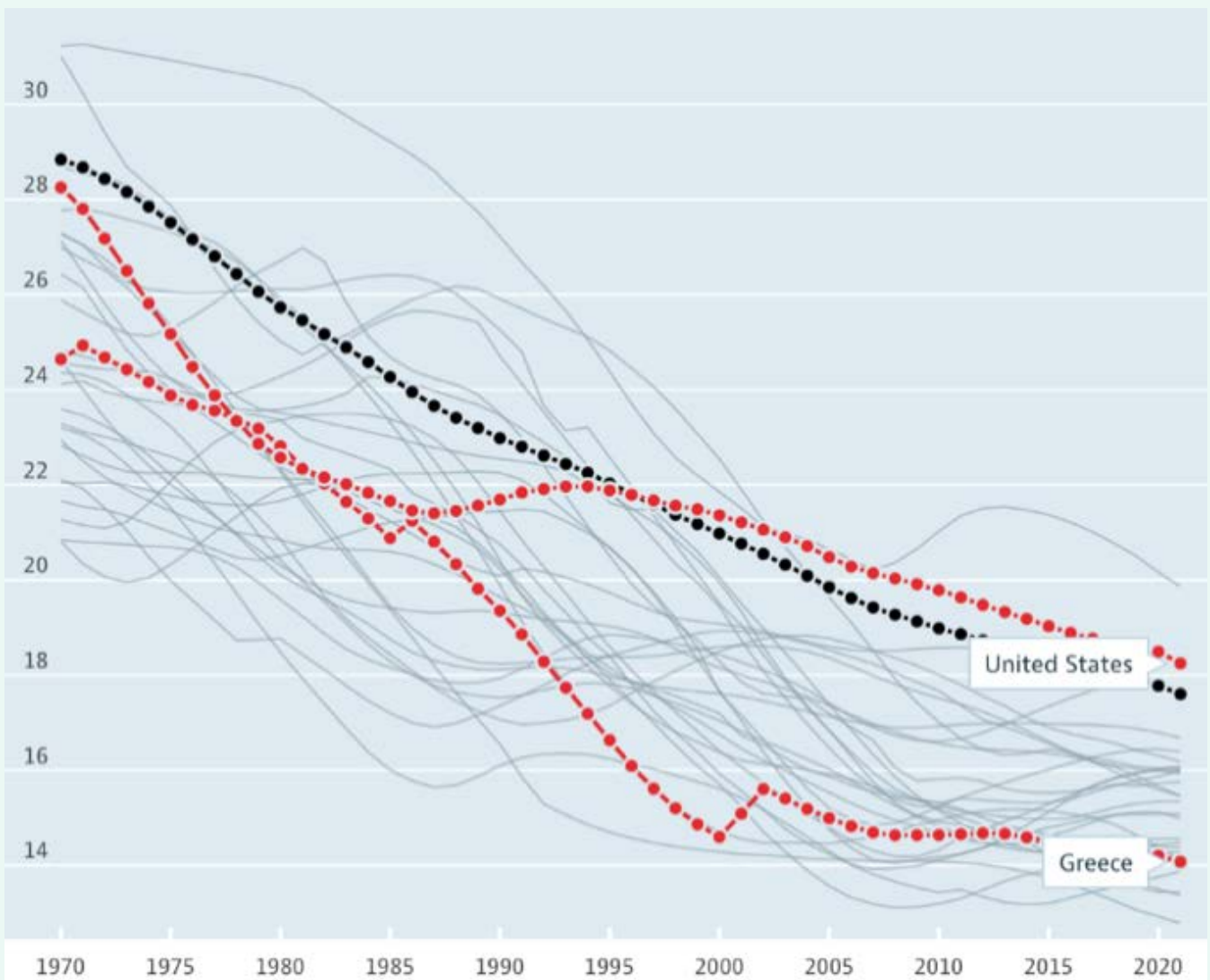


Figure 8: Total Youth Population in Greece Compared to Other Countries from 1970-2020 (Demography - Young Population - OECD Data, 2019)

COVID-19's Effect on Greek Youth

With the austerity measures still in place, Greece faced long-term financial hardship and was sent into further uncertainty and anxiety about the future after COVID-19 hit in early 2020. In the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Greek government was quick to issue a two-week closure of malls, department stores, cafes (excluding delivery services), libraries, museums, amusement parks, beauty salons, theaters, courthouses, cinemas, gyms, playground, schools, and clubs starting on March 14, 2020 (Kousi, 2021). By March 18th, 2020, the government had also banned gatherings of more than ten people and restricted entry into the country to only Greeks and EU citizens (Papadimas, 2020). These closures and harsh restrictions progressed throughout the country as the outbreak turned into a global pandemic. The Greek government eventually imposed a country-wide six-week lockdown and stay-at-home order taking strict measures early to reduce the spread of the virus.

Consequentially, this isolation from friends and school disrupted the lives of young adults, and severely impacted their mental health (Kornilaki, 2022).

During a time where the youth unemployment rate remained significantly higher than that of the general Greek population, the pandemic exacerbated this trend. According to the Labor Force Survey (LFS), the largest European household sample survey providing quarterly and annual results on labor participation (Youth Unemployment, 2022), during the pandemic a weak labor market in Greece affected young people aged 15-24 more than people aged 25-54 (Labour market in the light of the covid 19 pandemic - quarterly statistics, 2021).

Despite the effectiveness of Greece's early response to reduce the spread of the virus, the measures put in place led to widespread feelings of isolation and gave rise to depression, anxiety, and stress in many young adults, according to Kornilaki (2022) after surveying 1,018 Greek undergraduate students. Another survey regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Greek university students by researchers from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki concluded that there was a significant increase in students' stress, anxiety, and depression levels during the two years from 2020 to 2021 (Kavvadas, 2022). According to a study by Dr. Tasos Stylianou, professor of Business Administration for the School of Social Sciences at Hellenic Open University, approximately 80% of the 252 participants felt their mental health was worsened due to the disruption of daily routines and the limited availability of social support that came with the restrictions in Greece (Stylianou, 2023).

In response to these challenges, the pandemic sparked a resurgence of Greek youth participation in socio-political resistance and protests. According to Pandagiotis Zestanakis, a Hamburg University postdoctoral researcher, approximately 80 percent of young people in Greece saw the pandemic quarantine measures as a period for introspection, which induced uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and pessimism (Zestanakis, 2023). Anti-lockdown measures became the biggest driver of COVID-related protests, during which many participants expressed the empowerment they sought out through vocalizing their dissatisfaction towards the government's strict policies (Papa, 2023). These protests, along with the power of social media, encouraged a sense of "togetherness" and unified the youth despite the uncertainty and isolation induced by the pandemic.

The Challenges and Benefits of Using Sociocracy

Youth organizations offer a platform for young people to voice their opinions, advocate for change, learn valuable life skills, and (Cicognani, E. et al, 2015). These organizations require effective organizational structures to promote this idea of continued support and resources, as well as maintain membership numbers.



Figure 9: Diagram of Sociocracy (sociocracyforall.org)

Sociocratic Method

Sociocracy is a self-governance method based on consensus, where all members must agree before the group proceeds with a decision. The mission of sociocracy is to create 'a world in which people engage together to meet their individual and collective needs in an equitable way, with respect for all living beings' ("Why Sociocracy," 2023). In a sociocratic organization, members convene in small groups called 'circles.

There is a general circle, along with smaller sub-circles that form as needed. Circles can be linked to allow for communication and collaboration. The circles may also be broken up into smaller committees to undertake the group's current projects efficiently. Each individual circle chooses its organizational positions based on its needs, implementing roles such as secretary and facilitator. This allows the circles to be separate entities while still being linked to one another ("Sociocracy Basic Resources," 2022).

When the group needs to make a collective decision, every member of the circle must consent for the resolution to be passed. If even one member objects, the proposal must be revised to meet the needs of all members and receive unanimous consent to move forward. ("Why Sociocracy," 2023).

Political Benefits

Youth councils provide young people with a space to share their opinions and collaborate with their peers. For example, in the United Kingdom, many youth councils are invited to government meetings, where they are given a chance to represent their peers and make a difference in their community (Middleton, 2006). When these groups use the method of sociocracy to run their organization, these political benefits are drastically increased. Using this method, all opinions are heard since each member has equal voting power through consent. When all members must agree, no single member can dictate the conversations and agendas of the organizations ("Sociocracy for all", 2021).

Challenges of Sociocracy

While using sociocracy can have incredible positive impacts on its members and the surrounding community, there are still some challenges with using this method of organization. The first of which occurs when an organization has no shared aim. Because sociocracy requires consent from all members, groups with differing opinions have trouble accomplishing objectives since consensus is difficult to reach. Organizations may also face challenges when using the sociocratic method if there is a lack of communication and feedback among members. For example, if a member has issues with how the organization is running which they do not communicate sufficiently, they may become disenfranchised with the organization. (Rau, 2019). Lastly, a system such as sociocracy requires a specialized set of skills which take time and commitment to learn. Since the rules that govern sociocracy are not widely used, this may even involve having members get trained by external individuals which requires resources. (“Drawbacks of Sociocracy”).

All these challenges can cause organizations using sociocracy to struggle, leading to issues such as mismanaged leadership and low membership retention.’

Youth Organizations Using Sociocracy

An organization that uses sociocracy effectively is the Youth Power Coalition (YPC). This organization is “a coalition of youth leaders and adult allies building a movement for youth-led collective impact using sociocracy” (Wilder, 2022). They were created in New York City, USA, and currently consist of 11 different circles. These circles all work towards different objectives as pictured below in Figure 10. Many members of the YPC feel that their voice is being heard, and they can successfully make a change in the world because of the inclusion encouraged by sociocracy. Additionally, members of the group have many opportunities for personal development, through learning leadership and communication skills.

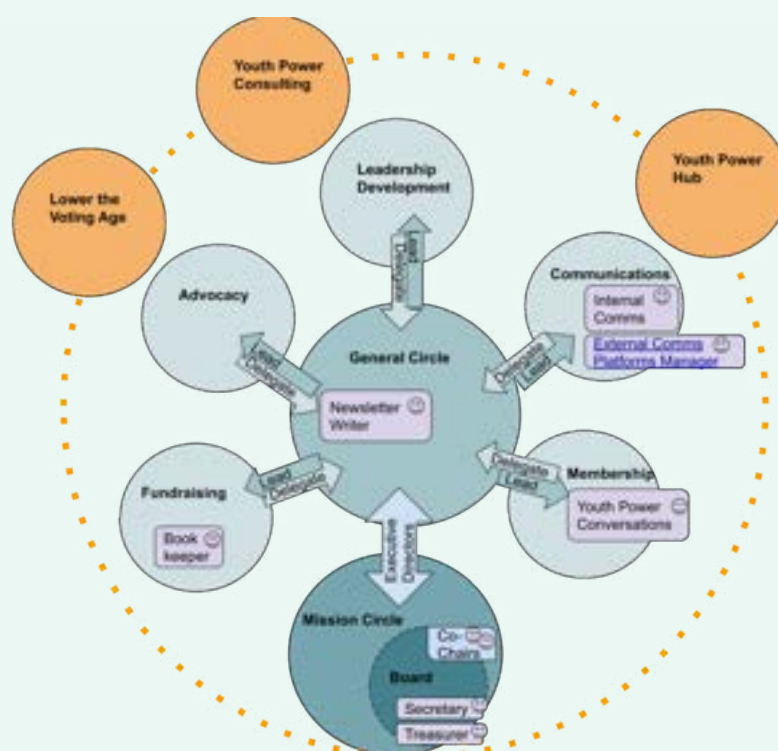


Figure 10: Youth Power Coalition Circle Structure (sociocracyforall.org)

Best Practices in Youth Engagement

For a youth organization to operate effectively, they must meet the needs of their members. Youth organizations associated with municipal governments may be more successful if they clearly fulfill a purpose, have adult mentors, and have coordinated recruitment (Collins, 2016). Alignment with best practices in these areas leads to increased attendance, which directly affects the execution of activities, recruitment, and adult motivation to support the group, resulting in a cycle of success.

Membership Recruitment

Recruitment is pivotal to the success of a youth group because it allows municipalities to connect with a new generation of membership and continue their organization. To better connect with local youth, Thomas (2009) recommends that municipalities use child-oriented communication practices, such as social media and other modern forms of communication (Thomas, 2009). Based on studies with members of Canadian youth groups, there are social media standards that municipalities should follow to avoid criticism from young people. The youth suggested that municipalities “provide regular updates, be responsive, be informative, communicate on past events, disseminate information, ensure confidentiality, and create a lively design” (Blanchet-Cohen, 2015). To supplement social media outreach, municipalities should use established networks to connect with youth. Schools, youth centers, health centers, and other local organizations can serve as a source of trusted information for youth. Municipalities should connect with key adults in those spaces and request for them to advocate for youth involvement in the youth council (Blanchet-Cohen, 2015).

Youth councils should strive to target a diverse audience throughout membership recruitment. Many youth organizations consist exclusively of college-bound students, and therefore focus their programming on developing university-related skills such as public speaking or resume writing. However, this model of programming excludes a large portion of the youth who are either uninterested in college or wish to attend trade schools (Augsberger et al., 2018). Exclusive programming therefore decreases the number of potential members in a diverse community by pushing away those with varying socioeconomic statuses, backgrounds, and cultures (Collins, 2016). It is vital that youth councils recruit members of all backgrounds, so all subsets of the population are heard and supported.

Serving a Purpose

Youth councils benefit from serving a larger purpose as this ideal encourages member engagement. In an ethnographic study of youth council members and adult stakeholders in the Boston metropolitan area, a common motivation amongst the youth in their study was to “make difference in their community” (Ausberger, 2017). A similar pattern was examined by Pirk’s study of two youth councils in Tartu, Estonia. Pirk noted that in both youth councils, a common theme was that the youth wanted to improve society (Pirk, 2016). Pirk also argues that the purpose of youth councils fits into two categories: increasing youth access to political discussions and improving the local community.

Pirk and Ausberger propose strategies to help municipalities ensure that youth councils are motivating their members. Pirk suggests that youth councils closely monitor their operations to ensure that they are fulfilling to their members (Pirk, 2016). Ausberger suggests that focusing the work of the group around

concerns relevant and of interest to the youth will encourage long-term participation. Furthermore, adapting programming to changes in the community and changing interests of members will allow a youth council to remain stable through periods of change (Ausberger, 2017).

Balancing Guidance and Autonomy

By creating a safe and creative space, municipalities encourage youth to become and remain engaged. Based on their participatory research with Canadian municipal youth groups, Dr. Blanchet-Cohen and Dr. Torres argue for the importance of creating a welcoming space for youth. They explain that to create a welcoming space, the facilitating adults should consider the accessibility of their meeting locations and times. It is also important for adults to consider their role in the meetings, such as how much they speak, their body language, and their participation levels. The theme of Blanchet-Cohen and Torres' "Tips for Adults" is the value of adults considering how they are affecting the youth in the group. Welcoming spaces encourage youth to share their ideas, build strong relationships with municipal officials, and most importantly, return to the groups.

In their ethnographic study of youth councils in the Boston metropolitan area, Ausberger (2017) expands on this point by advocating for youth development opportunities. In her interviews with Boston youth council members, young people often emphasized the significance of learning marketable skills through the youth council. Ausberger suggests that municipal governments can provide this opportunity by ensuring that young people are able to hold leadership positions and have access to adult guidance. They also argue that a successful youth council grants youth the maximum autonomy possible. The highly youth-centric councils in her study provided the council with

access to the mayor and voting power in the city council. Additionally, in these councils, there were adult mentors who provided education and counseling to the members.

A well-known guide for participatory planning with young people is Roger Hart's ladder, Figure 11. Written to provide a guide to NGO's interpreting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ladder is a tool used to assess how adult groups interact with young people. The highest degree of participation is "child-initiated, shared decisions with adults." As Hart explains, it is beneficial for adult facilitators to allow their youth participants to operate on whichever rung of the ladder that they wish. However, the adult facilitators should strive to allow the youth the autonomy to choose the level, as opposed to limiting their ability to choose (Hart, 2008).

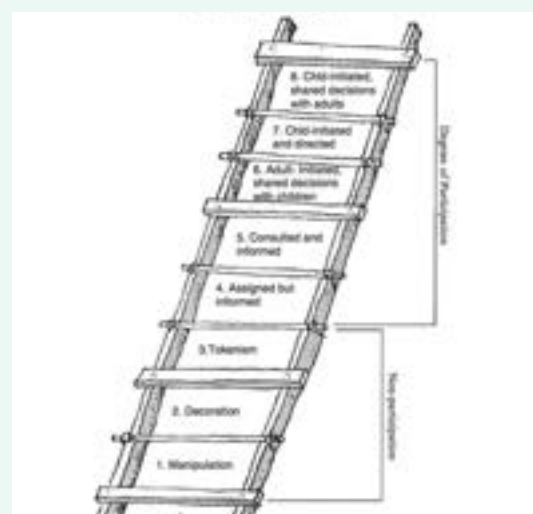


Figure 11: Hart's Ladder (Hart, 2008)

It is important to note that both Ausberger (2017) and Hart (2008) emphasize the importance of circumstances when determining what level of youth participation is appropriate for a group. While youth participation experts often advocate for youth-centric organizations, there are circumstances where this is not feasible. For example, in recently initiated youth groups, more adult presence may be necessary to ensure that youth and sponsor ideals are aligned.



Figure 12: Thessaloniki Regional area (commons.wikimedia.org).

Thermi Empowering its Youth

This project focuses on the Youth Council of the Municipality of Thermi, a suburb located on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, Greece. Figure 12 depicts Thermi's location on the Thermaic Gulf. Formed in 2011, the Thermi Municipality is divided into three smaller regions containing 14 communities and has a population of 53,315 ("Thermi, Greece," 2021).

The Youth Council of Thermi

One of the Municipality of Thermi's policies is "the operation of an institution that contributes to expanding the participation and expression of young people...at the local level" ("Δήμος Θέρμης"). Thus, the municipality formed the council to give its youth a platform for civic engagement, especially in the current economic and social conditions that have led to feelings of isolation, apathy, and helplessness

among Greek youth. The former General Secretary of Thermi proposed utilizing sociocracy in the council to ensure all members have input in decisions. This idea was well-received by the municipality; they hired two coordinators to begin learning about the method and help the youth practice sociocracy effectively (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023). In May 2020, the Municipality officially created the Youth Council of the Municipality of Thermi, which it defined as a collective body "that can empower and emancipate the youth to take action on issues that concern them through synergies, networking, extroversion, and consultation" ("Δήμος Θέρμης"). Members of the Thermi Youth Council must be between the ages of 15 and 29, live or work in Thermi, and show an interest in forming a youth collective for personal and community development. The council continues to follow a sociocratic model, outlined in Section 2.2, and is the only youth council in Greece to use this method.

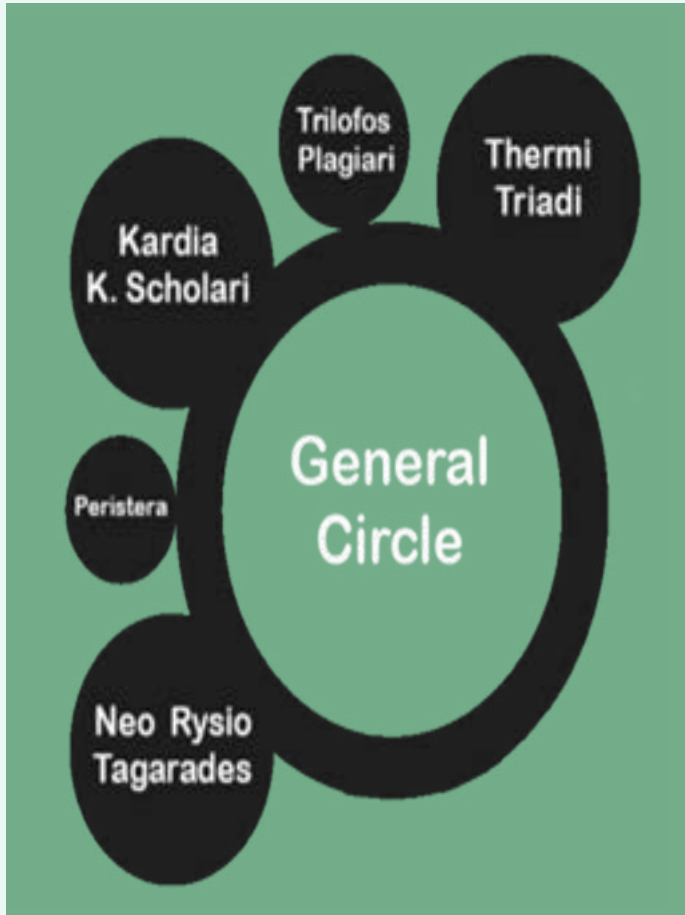


Figure 13: Thermi Youth Council's structure (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023).

Nine of Thermi's 14 communities are represented in the Youth Council. Members are organized into five local circles based on where they live, although youth in areas that do not have a local circle may join another if they want to get involved. The five different circles are: Thermi-Triadi, Trilofos-plagiari, Kardia-Kato Sholari, Neo Rysio-Tagarades, and Persitera. The local circles and the general circles have the same structure and roles, with a secretary, an internal communication chair, an external communication chair, and a facilitator (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023). The secretary keeps a daily agenda and documents their progress on projects, the internal communication chair sends messages to council members to inform them of meetings and keeps attendance at the meetings, the external communication manages the council's

social media accounts and speaks on behalf of the council at events, and the facilitator ensures the council is following the sociocratic model during the meeting. The local circles also have an additional role that serves as their representative in the general circle to unite all local circles.

Projects are accomplished in each individual circle as well as the general circle. The council chooses their projects to address community issues that concern them. Some examples of their previous projects include volunteer cleanups, planting trees, and hosting a culture festival (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023). For some projects, such as the volunteer cleanups, the council does not require assistance or additional supplies and operates on their own. For others, including the culture festival, the council decides what supplies they will need and then communicates their ideas with their coordinators in the Office of Education and Social Protection of the Municipality of Thermi. The coordinators then tell the youth council if their plan is feasible (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023). If possible, then the council begins working with various departments of the Municipality of Thermi to achieve its goals, otherwise the youth council must work with the office to find a middle-ground before proceeding with their project.

The youth council also collaborates with other youth organizations. It is a partner of SAYouth, which is a project "reaffirming the civic participation of young people for a sustainable democracy" ("Δήμος Θέρμης"). In this project, the council works with eight organizations from other European countries, including Sweden, Poland, and Italy, to increase "a sense of belonging of youngsters in public institutions at local and European level" (SAYouth Project, 2021). Beyond being a member of this

organization, the Thermi Youth Council also works with other groups for events, such as local cultural clubs, local athletic clubs, and nearby youth councils.

Thermi Youth Council History

The youth council held their first meeting in May 2020 online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since at least three people are needed to form a circle, the five local circles each conducted their own meetings because initial membership was higher. These meetings are held monthly and open to any youth in Thermi interested in participating, following the sociocracy model with open discussion to make decisions together. When making proposals, the council holds an open vote within the circle. Consent is needed from all council members to proceed with a project and if there are any objections, the proposal must be adjusted and voted on

again to meet the needs of all participants. This ensures that all involved are content with the decision and ready to move forward with the project process.

The youth council was very active in its early stages of the pandemic when meetings were online. As pandemic restrictions were lifted, the council began meeting in person again and for reasons that remain unclear, interest in the council declined. The local circles still exist, but currently only general assembly meetings are held until more members join the youth council (C. Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023). As of early 2023, the youth council holds meetings in a hybrid format, where participants have the option to attend in person or online since some members can only attend online. We seek to better understand the reasons why interest in the youth councils across the municipality have declined.



Figure 14: Tree Planting Event and 2nd Art Festival (C.Kokkali, personal communication, February 9, 2023)

Our Approach

The goal of our project is to determine the interests and concerns of Thermi youth to identify opportunities for broader civic youth engagement and increased participation in the Thermi Youth Council. We hope to accomplish this through the following objectives:

- Identify the motivations, actions, and perspectives of the Municipality of Thermi in relation to the Thermi Youth Council.
- Assess perspectives of current youth council members regarding the operations of the Youth Council.
- Determine engagement opportunities for the youth council based on the interests, commitments, and challenges of the youth in Thermi.
- Explore the best practices of youth organizations in Thessaloniki and identify opportunities for the Thermi Youth Council.
- Present gathered data and facilitate discussion about possible solutions.

Identify the motivations, actions, and perspectives of the Municipality of Thermi with relation to the Thermi Youth Council.

To understand the relationship between the Municipality of Thermi and the Thermi Youth Council, we utilized key informant interviews. We investigated why the municipality views the youth council as a successful form of youth engagement, how the municipality supports the youth council, and what factors the municipality believes to have contributed to the creation,

and decline, of youth councils across Greece. We explored the following topics:

- What were the original needs the Thermi Youth Council sought to fill?
- How did the Thermi Youth Council initiative get started?
- How does the municipality support youth council initiatives?
- What youth council programs positively stand out to the municipality?
- What does the municipality see as the source of declined engagement?

We learned what the municipality sees as the purpose of the youth council to determine how well it aligned with youth interests. We also explored what the municipality sees as the major successes and challenges of the youth council.

We utilized key informant interviews with employees of the Office of Education and Social Protection who have worked with the Thermi Youth Council. We utilized a semi-structured interview format with questions in Appendix B. The semi-structured interviews focused on the collaboration between the youth council and municipality as well as what the municipality views as opportunities for growth. Some questions we asked are:

- What was the reason behind the formation of the youth council?
- Can you describe how the youth council helps the municipality?
- How does the municipality support the youth council?

Assess perspectives of current youth council members regarding the operations of the Thermi Youth Council.

We wanted to understand the views of current and past youth council members regarding the operations of the youth council, what they have enjoyed about their experience, as well as their thoughts on the source of the recent decline in membership and engagement.

To gather this information, we conducted key informant interviews with current youth council members, Chara Kokkali and Ioanna Papafotiou. These members are very active, so we wanted to know why they choose to dedicate their time to the council. With this information, we determined what the council has done well and how its strengths can be used to attract more young people.

Some examples of the questions we asked are:

- Why did you join the youth council?
- What do you enjoy about being in the youth council?
- What would you say is the youth council's biggest strength?
- Is there anything you would like to change about the youth council?

The full list of questions can be found in Appendix C. The answers to these questions helped us understand how youth council members feel about their participation in the council. In learning what the members enjoyed about the youth council, we were able to understand why they remain in the council. We used inductive coding to analyze the transcripts of the interviews ("Essential guide to coding qualitative data"). We identified and developed codes for recurring themes across the two interviews by highlighting them in the transcript text accordingly. This gave us insight into reasons for continued participation and potential areas for adjustment to enhance the members' experiences.



Determine engagement opportunities for the youth council based on the interests, commitments, and challenges of the youth in Thermi.

We wanted to determine the interests, commitments, and challenges of the youth in Thermi to identify events they would want to attend and what might be inhibiting their participation in the youth council.

We first distributed online surveys to youth in Thermi during school visits to gauge their interests and commitments. Examples of the survey questions include the following:

- What do you do in your free time?
- What type of events would you want to attend?
- What types of municipal events sound interesting to you?

We also used a Likert scale to measure the youth's attitudes towards Thermi and civic engagement. The Likert scale allows respondents to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement (Sullivan, 2013). Examples of the Likert scale questions from our surveys include the following:

- I wish I lived in another country
- I want to be part of a political movement
- I will move out of Greece

The full list of survey questions can be found in Appendices H and I.

We also aimed to delve further into the "why" behind what makes specific activities, groups, or aspects of their communities memorable and engaging. We intended on gaining a deeper understanding of the following topics:

- What activities, events, and discussions do the youth want to engage in?
- What keeps the youth involved in the organizations they are a part of?
- What would encourage the youth to be more active in the youth council?

We explored the questions above through Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). YPAR explores challenges through participating in and doing research with people instead of on people. The idea of being a participatory researcher places one within the investigation, acting as a facilitator instead of an observer. The goal of this facilitator role is to catalyze discussion and ideas through interactive games or creative activities while creating a safe and open space for people to express their views. The interactive games and activities we implemented can be found in Appendix E-1 below. Through games and forms of creative expression, we hoped to energize the group and gain a deeper understanding of their interests, experiences, and perspectives (Jacques, 2011).

The game and activity categories we implemented include games to elicit reason, art depiction, and photo elicitation. Our primary game to elicit reason allowed the youth to answer questions and submit responses anonymously on post-it notes. We conducted this activity at the Public Vocational Training Institute of Thermi with two groups of around 20 technical college students. For the first group, we asked them to write responses to the prompt, "What teams or clubs have you been a part of?" For the second group, we asked them to write responses to the prompt, "What annoys you in your daily life?" At the conclusion of the activities, we facilitated discussion by inviting the students to group post-it notes with common themes. We then debriefed the activity with the groups to further understand the reasoning behind their responses and groupings.



Figure 15: Images from Thermi Square Interviews

For the debriefing session, we utilized the questions outlined in Appendices E-1.1 and E-2.

The next activities we implemented were art depiction and photo elicitation. With art depiction, we aimed to inspire the creation of personal narratives through painting, drawing, or sculpting. To accomplish this, we visited the 2nd High School of Thermi and asked a class of 24 high school students to create something to respond to the following prompt: "Describe how you feel about living in Dimos Thermi. Write a caption or story on the back that explains what you created." We then used the debrief questions found in Appendix E-1.2 to further investigate the why behind what the students drew, explore the common themes, and delve further into their feelings about where they live and any challenges they may face. Photo elicitation uses photographs or other visual mediums to generate discussion, which creates data and understanding (Glaw, 2017). These creative activities are designed to give participants an artifact to describe something that may be difficult to conceptualize in words alone.

Along with these YPAR activities, we visited the Central Square of the Municipality of Thermi to interview and elicit conversations with the youth in the target age group of the Thermi Youth Council. Using the interview questions outlined in Appendix D, we wanted to get a better understanding of the following questions:

- What do the Thermi youth do in their free time?
- What do they like about clubs that they were or are in?
- What annoys them in their daily lives?
- What is preventing their participation in the council?

The goal of these conversations and YPAR activities was to allow participants to discover complex ideas naturally and elicit potential questions for further discussion. We hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the youth in Thermi by providing a space where everyone's ideas and perspectives were heard while encouraging everyone to come together and collaborate for change. We then used this information to help the youth council identify opportunities for future events or projects and proposed potential reasons for the decline in youth council participation.



Explore the best practices of youth organizations in Thessaloniki and identify opportunities for the Thermi Youth Council.

To understand the operations and perspectives of successful youth organizations in the Thessaloniki region, we utilized key informant interviews. We spoke with the Thessaloniki Youth Council and Youth Action Aid, an international NGO. We investigated how these organizations engage with local youth, how they predict what events will be successful, and what they see as areas of success and growth within the operations of the Thermi Youth Council. We explored the following topics:

- What are the practices that these organizations view as crucial to their success?
- How do these organizations attract new members and retain current members?
- How do these organizations assess the needs of their membership?
- What do these organizations see as areas of growth for the Thermi Youth Council?

For our key informant interviews with an employee of Action Aid and members of the Thessaloniki Youth Council we utilized a semi-structured interview format with questions in Appendix J. The semi-structured interviews focused on the operations of their respective organizations as well as what they view as opportunities for growth for the Thermi Youth Council. Some questions we asked are:

- How does your organization decide what events will be successful?
- How do you recruit new members and does this work well for you?
- How could the youth council improve?



Present data collected and facilitate discussion about possible solutions

After synthesizing the data collected from the interviews, surveys, and YPAR activities conducted with municipal officials, current youth council members, and Thermi youth we summarized our findings into a presentation for the youth council and municipal officials. The presentation was broken into four major sections: introduction, youth council background, approach, and findings.

The introduction consisted of a brief explanation of what the Interactive Qualifying Project is, what we were doing in Greece, and the overall goal of our project to provide context to those who were unfamiliar. The next section described how the youth council was created, who its members are, what types of events they host, and how they use sociocracy. We also discussed the decrease in membership experienced by the Thermi Youth Council.

Following that, we moved into our data-gathering approach. This was broken down into four major sections: key informant interviews, Thermi square interviews, surveys, and YPAR activities with students. Finally, we discussed the demographics of those we surveyed and presented the information and visuals we created as our findings section. This section also included images of the artifacts that were gathered during these activities, as well as the physical artifacts which were available for the audience to see.

Following this, we facilitated a discussion with youth council members, municipal officials, and the general audience answer the following questions:

- What results seem most useful for the council?
- What might stop youth from joining the youth council?
- What could the council do to encourage young people to join?



Figure 16: Pictures from Our Presentation

Findings

We chose to approach this project through an asset-based lens as opposed to a problem-based view. As a result, this paper primarily examines the current state of the youth council and the general youth of Thermi, as opposed to focusing on why past members have left. We would also like to emphasize that neither the members of the youth council nor the municipal officials that we interviewed are critical of youth council operations, and instead speak very favorably of the organization.

Despite the membership and engagement difficulties that the Thermi Youth Council is currently facing, there are a small subset of members that remain extremely devoted to the organization and are invested in its success and continuation. These committed members are the only members of the youth council whom we interviewed, and they are the members who are quoted in this section. Therefore, the opportunities for growth that we are exploring are limited in perspective.

**"It will be one of
the best
experiences of
your life"**

CHARA KOKKALI'S MESSAGE TO POTENTIAL YOUTH
COUNCIL MEMBERS

MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS



Chrysa and Vasilis

Chrysa Klimatsouda and Vasilis Chrimatopoulous are municipal officials directly involved with the Youth Council of the Municipality of Thermi. Both work for the Office of Education and Social Protection full-time and are responsible for advising the Youth Council and providing guidance when necessary. Additionally, they help the council acquire funding for activities that require a budget.

Chrysa has been involved with the Youth Council of Thermi since it was restarted in 2020. Originally formed fifteen years ago, she believes the council failed due to political parties using it to gather new members. In her opinion, the politicians saw the councils as the next generation of their party and in treating it as such, they caused a large public disinterest in the councils. In 2020, the Municipality of Thermi wanted to increase youth participation in their community. The mayor at the time asked Chrysa to help restart the council. Chrysa agreed and visited schools to promote the council and held an open call to generate interest from the community. Initially, there were seventy members in the organization, which was formed with a sociocratic governing

structure. Chrysa has been working with the council ever since and during our interview, she stated she sees herself as a mother figure to its members.

Vasilis, the other advisor, has only been working for the municipality for a year; however, he enjoys working with young people and wants to show them that a different future is possible and that the status quo can be changed. He sees the youth council as a way for young people to make a positive impact in their community. While he does not live in Thermi, he supports the council to the best of his abilities through assisting with projects and providing guidance when necessary. He believes that the relationship between the council and the municipal government is mutually beneficial and that they share many of the same goals.

YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS



Chara

Chara Kokkali is an active member of the youth council, dedicating her time every week to ensure its effective operation. She joined in 2020 and had previously held the position of

external affairs in the council.

In the future, Chara plans to join the diplomatic corps, which will require her to leave Greece; however, she hopes to return to her home country when she retires. Chara highly recommends joining the youth council, stating that it “will be one of the best experiences in your life.”

Ioanna



Ioanna Papafotiou was one of the first members to join the youth council in 2020. She was initially introduced to the council at school through one of Chrysa’s presentations to attract potential members. This piqued Ioanna’s interest in joining a volunteer group. She currently holds the external affairs position, which she describes as being equivalent to a full-time job. The position involves managing all social media and external communications, as well as bringing outside information to the council. The amount of time she dedicates to the position each day varies depending on the council's projects. For example, if an event requires collaboration with other organizations, her duties are increased. As a student, it can be challenging to balance her studies with her council duties. To reduce her workload, she claims that the council has discussed splitting

the position into two separate roles; the first would be responsible for social media and the second for all other duties performed by her position. Despite the challenges, Ioanna enjoys working with people and being part of the council has allowed her to meet those she otherwise would not have. It has also given her the opportunity to travel across Europe and learn more about the workings of the Municipality of Thermi. She believes that being a member of this organization provides its members with the opportunity to make a difference in their community, but this potential is limited without new members. As such, she believes the council having low membership is a missed opportunity for the youth of her community.



Through visits to Thermi Square, the 2nd High School of Thermi, and the Public Vocational Training Institute of Thermi, we gained insight into the interests of Thermi youth, their perspectives of Thermi, their daily concerns, and their future plans. The high school students' ages range from 16-18 and the technical college students' ages range from 18-21. The age and gender distributions for the school visits can be seen in the charts below:

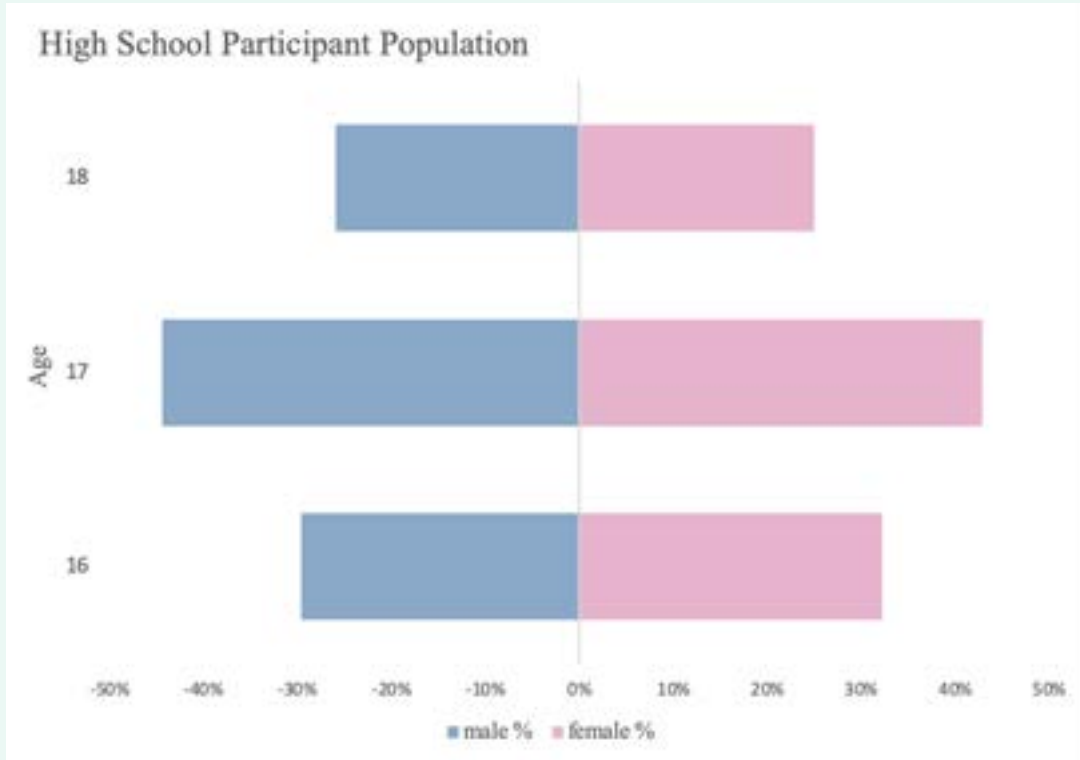


Figure 17: High School Participant Populations

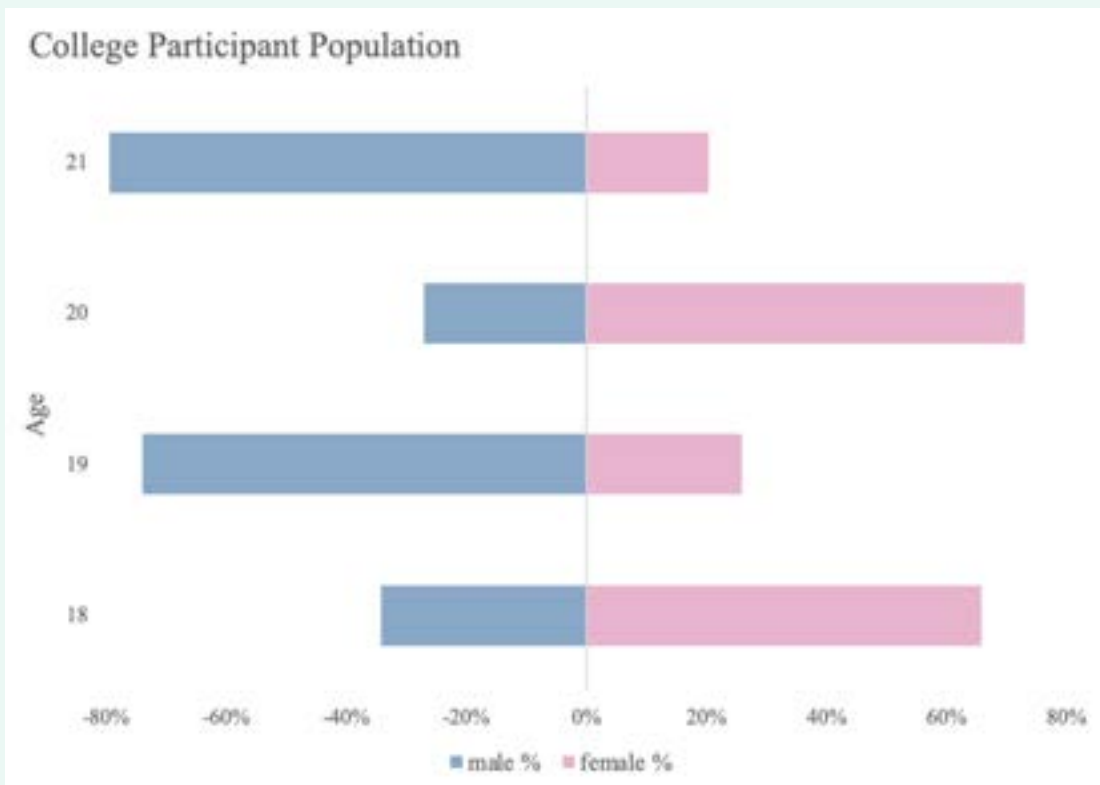


Figure 18: College Participant Populations

The figure below shows the different parts of the municipality where the technical college students are from.

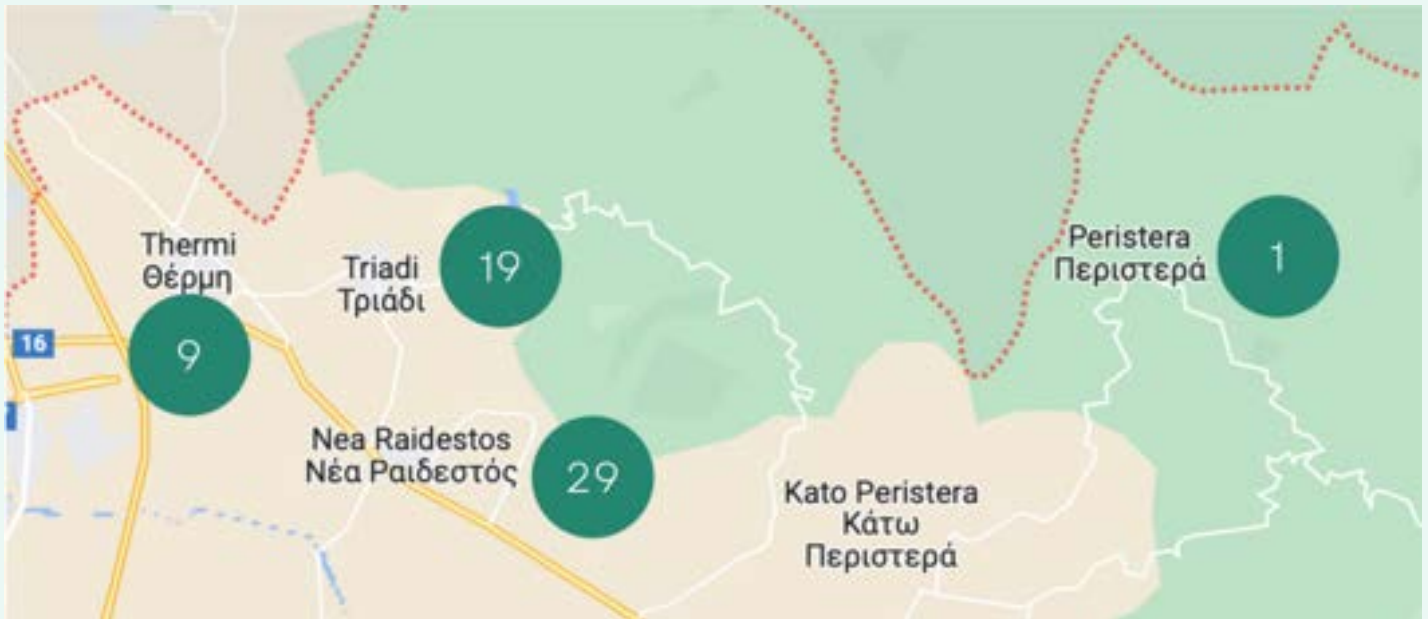


Figure 19: High School Student Village of Origin

Appreciation for Natural Landscape

During our high school visit, we asked the students to draw something that conveys their feelings about living in the Municipality of Thermi and write a caption to explain their creation. All 24 drawings and captions can be found in Appendix K. 15 of the 24 drawings depicted the scenery and reflected students' connections to nature, as shown by the images and captions below:



"I like this place, because I can come in contact with the environment, as there is a lake near a village called Triadi and there is also a park where I can have a great time with my friends." – High school student



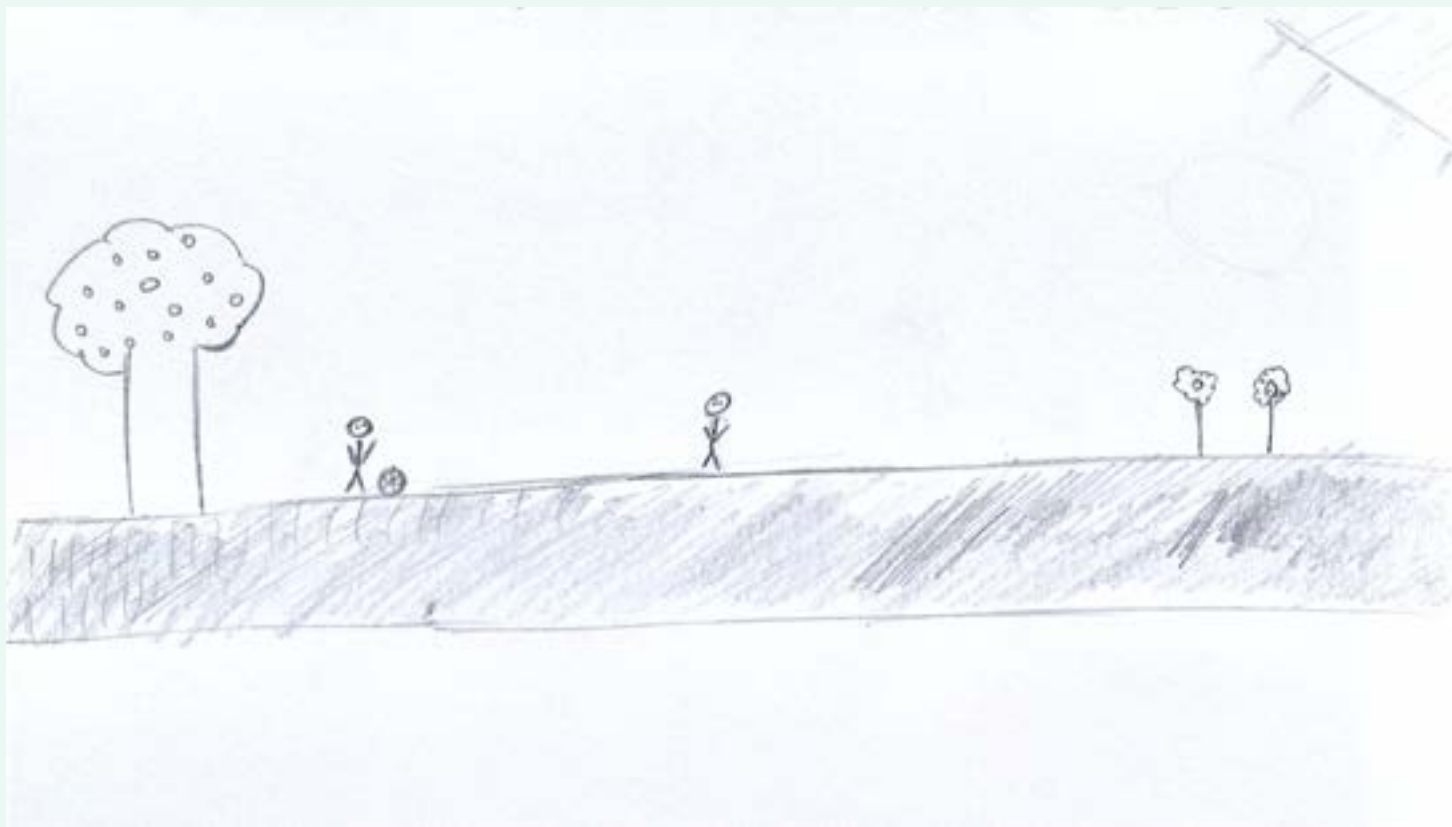
"I feel that we have the ability to be so close to nature and we get to spend much time outside. One of the places close to us is the Fragud Thermis, in which we have access to football, basketball, and tennis courts."

- High school student

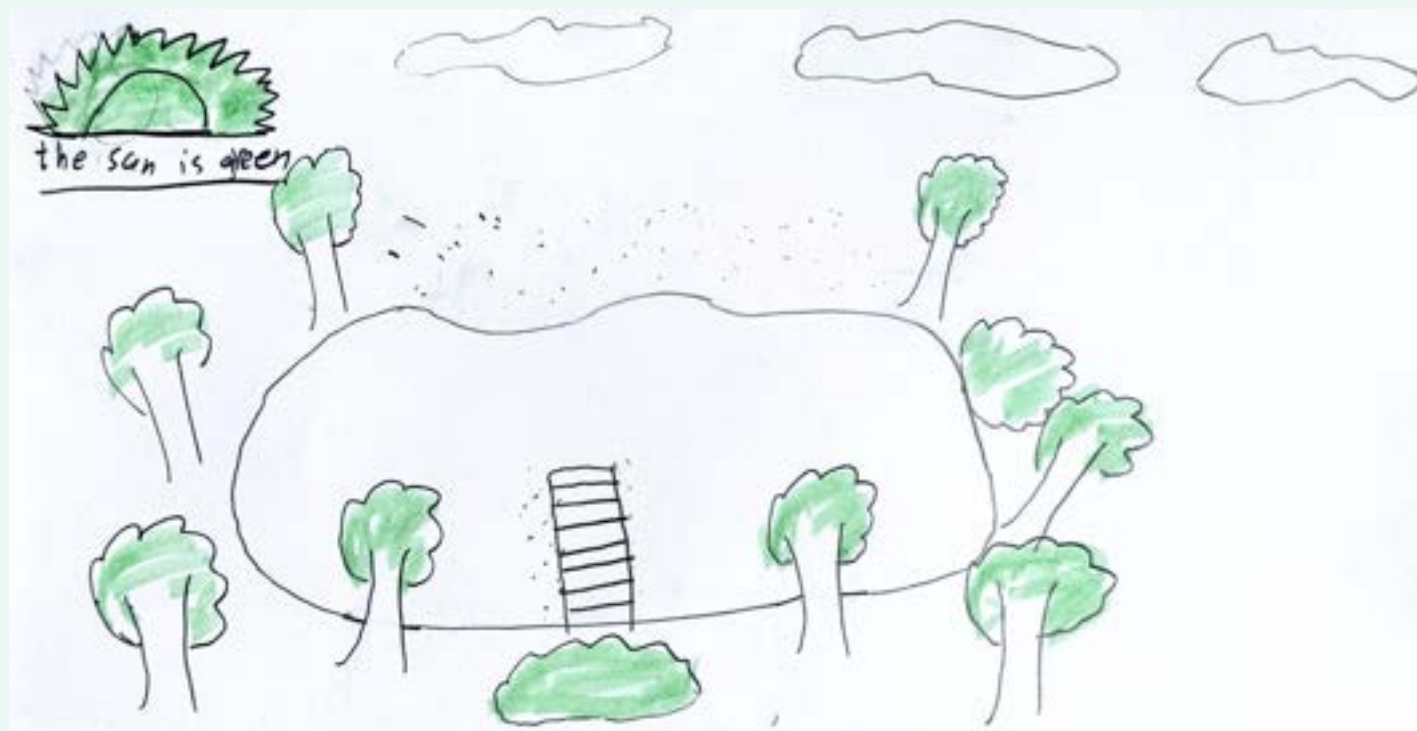
"I like living in the Municipality of Thermi, because it is close to nature. My paper depicts the natural beauty that Thermi has as I have painted the trees, the flowers, and a lake."

- High school student





"There are 2 kids in the nature playing football and having fun with each other. Thermi is a place where kids are having fun and they have a lot of things to do in nature." - High school student



"I drew the lake of Thermi that has a lot of trees, bushes, and grass around it. It is a very beautiful place that makes everyone that visits it feel free and happy to be there. You have to visit it." - High school student

One student discussed that for the drawing to the right, they “drew a tree that has words that mean something for [them] like friends, family.” The student also mentioned they felt connected to Thermi for the reasons depicted in the drawing—joy, quiet, freedom, peace, family, and friends. These reasons were also prevalent themes across a majority of the drawings and captions, including the one below. With the drawings we received, we were able to better understand how close the communities are in Thermi.



Figure 20: High school drawings with nature theme



"This is an image of the lake near my house that brings me happiness and joy. I usually go jogging and enjoy the beautifulness of this landscape. I feel free here and communicate with my friends."

- High school student

Lack of Novelty in Thermi

Although the youth acknowledged the natural amenities and tranquil atmosphere of where they lived through their drawings, during our follow-up discussion, some students voiced that living in Thermi posed restraints. These insights gave us a better understanding of what aspects of Thermi could be improved and what opportunities the Thermi Youth Council could provide to help with this. One of the students expressed having a need for more novelty as one gets older:

"I just think that it's a perfect place to grow up and we had a pleasant childhood. But as we grow up, we need more things to do, like in the center of Thessaloniki there are more shops, more cafes or restaurants, and there's more life to it. But here it's pretty quiet and we... go to school, we go to our home, we speak to our friends and that's it. We don't have any new experiences and stuff like that"

- High school student

One student discussed a lack of social connection to people outside of Thermi:

"We don't get to know other people and communicate with others. We only know each other; we are a very closed society/community"

- High school student

Another student emphasized the negative side of being a part of a close community and a sense of feeling stuck:

"We are a really close community and that has its privileges, but it's not that good, because we all know each other... it increases the gossiping... [Thermi] is more for older people not for the young people. Young people want opportunities, want to go someplace else..."

- High school student

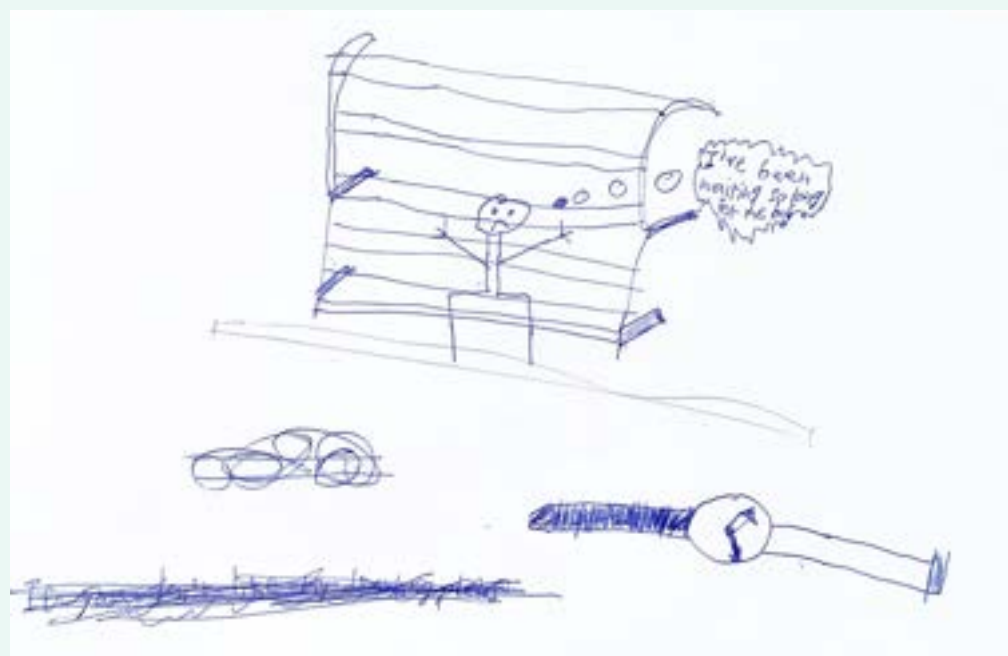
Many of the Thermi youth we interviewed feel connected to where they live through their friends, family, and access to nature, but feel that there are more opportunities elsewhere due to the limited activities in Thermi. One student mentioned that for something like bowling, **"there is not even... a close place where we can have that kind of fun"** (High school student, personal communication, April 4, 2023). When prompted in the survey with **"I wish I lived in another country,"** out of 58 high school student respondents, 8.6% and 27.6% strongly agreed or agreed respectively while only 10.3% and 5.2% strongly disagreed or disagreed respectively.

Frustrations with Unreliable Transportation

The lack of transit access to activities was also suggested by the limited transportation options available. When we asked the youth to describe annoyances they had in their daily lives, many of the youth in Thermi commented on public transportation, specifically **"the traffic, the buses, [and] the terrible schedules of the buses..."** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023).

When asked if there was anything that could be done to help these issues they mentioned **“If we have more buses or we have better drivers... the drivers should be more careful and [pay] more attention to the signs”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). Another interviewee translated for their friend that **“he would like more ways of transportation because [they] only get buses here and everything is always very bad”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). From these conversations, there is a sense that many of the youth in Thermi rely on public transportation. This reliance was found to be an issue, especially for students who commute to school. One interviewee mentioned that **“Transportation is terrible. [They] live an hour and a half away from [their] school so transportation can be pretty shitty”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). The lack of mobility and sense of feeling stuck in Thermi was also expressed during our high school visit art depiction activity with the drawing shown below:

We found that the youth were also frustrated by the amount of **“careless drivers”** and traffic. One interviewee expressed that **“There’s lots of traffic here... I don’t like it. It gets me angry”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). Another interviewee mentioned that **“traffic is a very big problem”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). When asked if the interviewees could think of any solutions to address this problem, they discussed that **“The municipality isn’t working perfectly. The place has underground parking [which] doesn’t work because it’s free. That’s a good solution for the traffic”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). During our technical college visit, one of the students mentioned that the lack of reliable transportation options, diligence when driving, and respect for pedestrians were all reasons for frustration with Thermi. With this sense of danger and limited access to alternatives, the youth find that transportation is a restriction with where they live.



“In Dimos Thermis, the thing I don’t like is that in my village, we don’t have enough buses. One time, a bus [arrived] after 2 hours and 40 minutes of waiting.”

- High school student

Figure 21: High School Drawing with Transportation Theme

“There is only a few people leading, not considering the opinion of the others, or how to better their land and just looking at us for opportunities to further the gap between them and us.”

- High school student



Figure 22: High School Drawing with Political Dissatisfaction Theme

Frustrations with Current Politics

The youth also expressed their qualms with the current political state of Greece. From our survey results, we gathered that with the claim “I want to be part of a political movement,” of the 58 respondents, 17.2% strongly disagreed and 43.1% disagreed, while 6.9% agreed and 3.4% strongly agreed and out of the 48 technical college student respondents, 23.9% strongly disagreed and 28.3% disagreed while only 6.5% agreed. These results are limited in that we had not defined the word “politics” clearly and therefore interpretations of the term will differ across the sample population, yet most of the students indicated they would not want to be involved with a political movement. When interviewing the youth in Thermi Square, one interviewee bluntly noted,

“Our current political state is pretty shitty. We had the train [incident] ... a few weeks ago and no one has taken accountability for it. They're trying to claim it on one man and honestly... it's a whole situation that nobody wants to deal with...”

This interviewee also mentioned that **“The people are so used to voting for one specific thing and they usually forget about everything that is wrong... they fail to see their wrongs in our current political situation”** (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). During our discussion with the technical college students, they mentioned that they have **“no faith”** in the government and that **“the government doesn't listen to people”** (Technical college student, personal communication, March 27, 2023)

We found that this frustration with the government and politics also affected the Thermi youth's perspectives of the youth council. We found that out of the 16 interviewees from Thermi Square, only two had heard of the Thermi Youth Council. After explaining what the youth council was and did for the municipality, we asked if they would want to join.

¹ On February 2023, a passenger train carrying hundreds of people from Athens collided with an oncoming freight train near the city of Larissa in central Greece. The incident resulted in a fiery wreck and tragically killed 57 people. Thousands have protested and expressed anger at the lack of accountability for the incident and demand punishment for those responsible. (Jazeera, 2023)

One interviewee responded that,

“It’s really hard to trust [the youth council and municipality]... here, usually, people try to take advantage of the system and its people, and it can end up really bad”

(Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023).

This unfamiliarity with the youth council and close association with the government has contributed to hesitancy in wanting to join.

Reasons for Commitment Issues

Through our visit to the technical college, we got a better understanding of how time restraints and school interfere with commitments to outside organizations. The pie chart to the right depicts the ratio of students that indicated whether they are a part of a group or organization. Out of the 21 students, only 26% were members of an outside organization or club. These students noted that groups they were a part of allowed them to express themselves or partake in their favorite activities, like playing a sport. Students that were no longer part of groups indicated that injuries or lack of free time prevented them from continuing.

We found that having limited free time was a common theme amongst many of the youth in Thermi. When we asked the youth in Thermi Square if they would be interested in joining the Thermi Youth Council, many expressed that they were “extremely busy” mainly with school and other obligations. One interviewee expressed that, “As much as [they] would love to, it’s gonna take a pretty big part of [their] day and [they] already have not much time with [their] friends” (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). We asked another interviewee that had expressed interest in the council if anything would prevent them from joining the youth council to which they responded, “The free time I have... it’s less so that is a problem” (Interviewee, personal communication, March 24, 2023). Another interviewee replied to the same question with “school.” The Thermi youth expressed being committed to their studies and many of them could not guarantee they had enough time to participate in an outside organization.



Figure 23: Thermi Square participants who are still a part of their clubs

Based on our discussions and survey results, we found that the Thermi youth have diverse interests. Through our survey data, we were able to get a better understanding of what the youth in Thermi enjoy doing in their free time. The results for both the high school and technical college student responses can be seen in the charts below:

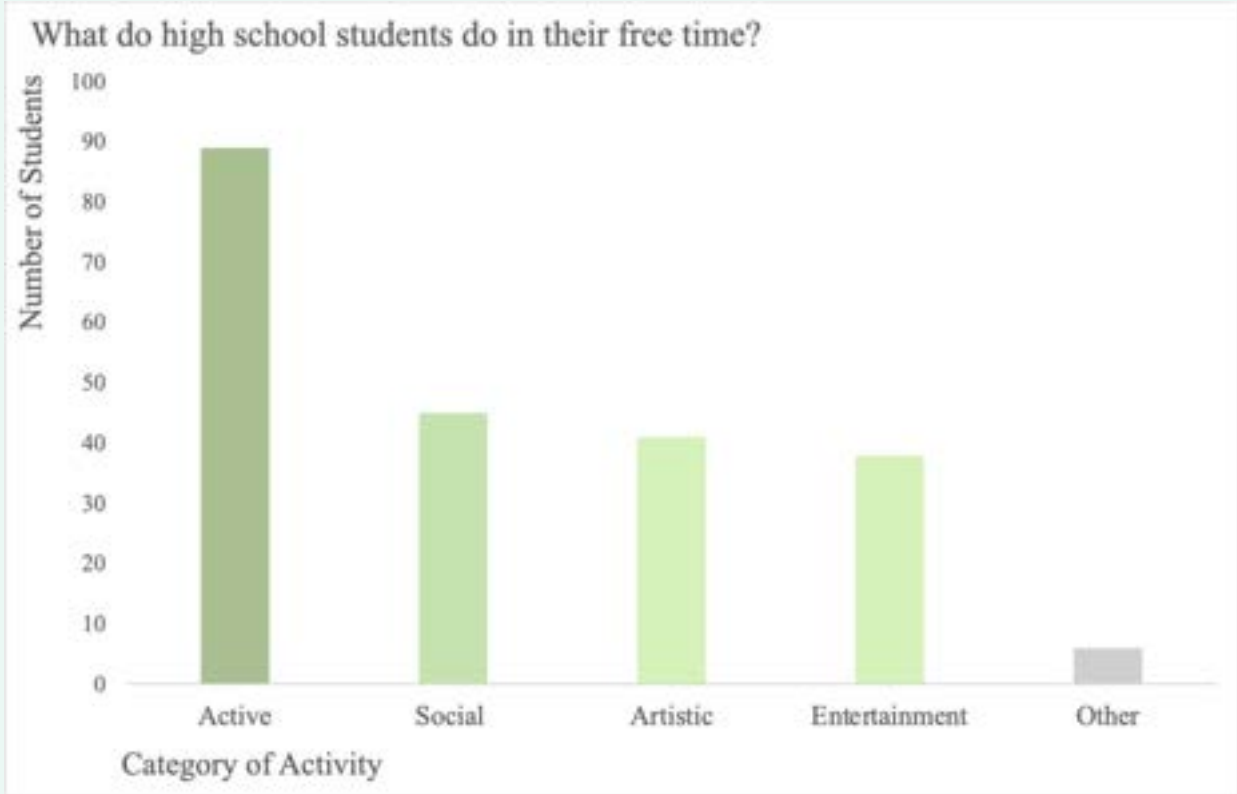


Figure 24: What high school survey respondents do in their free time

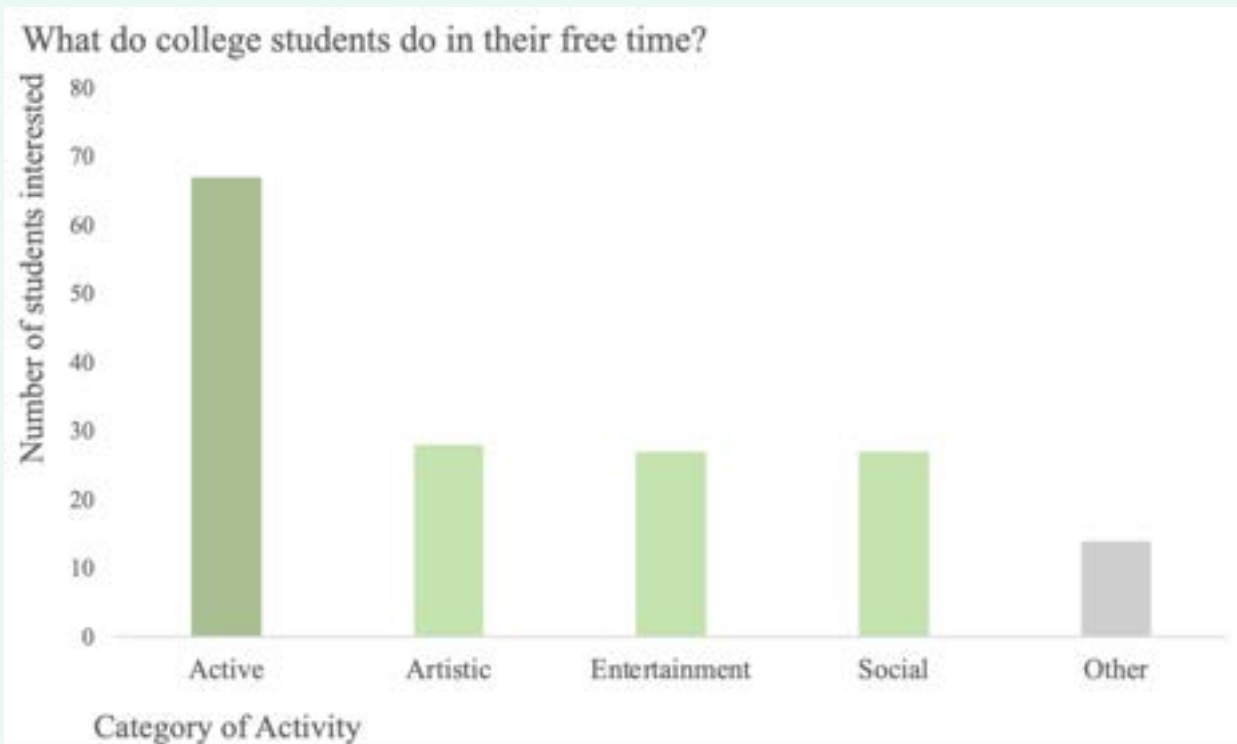


Figure 25: What college survey respondents do in their free time

The “Active” category consists of physical activities such as team sports (football, basketball, etc.), working out (run, gym, yoga), or going for a walk. The “Social” category consists of activities such as drinking coffee.² The “Artistic” category consists of activities such as singing, playing an instrument, and art. The “Entertainment” category consists of activities such as watching TV/movies and playing games. Activities within the “Other” category included cooking, working, science, and reading/writing.

Of the 58 high school student responses, the highest individual category was drinking coffee, which had 43 responses, followed by going for a walk with 39 responses, and watching TV/movies with 37 results. Of the 46 technical college student responses, the highest individual category was going for a walk, which had 37 responses, followed by drinking coffee with 26 responses, and watching TV/movies with 23 responses. These findings indicate that high school students mainly enjoy socializing, being active, and forms of entertainment.

From our YPAR post-it note activity with 21 technical college students, we got a better understanding of what activities they enjoy as depicted in the word cloud below. The students mentioned during our discussion that sports were popular since different ages can participate, and young people enjoy being physically active and sociable. They also mentioned that more artistic activities are popular because they allow young people to express themselves.



Figure 26: YPAR post-it note responses for what college students do in their free time

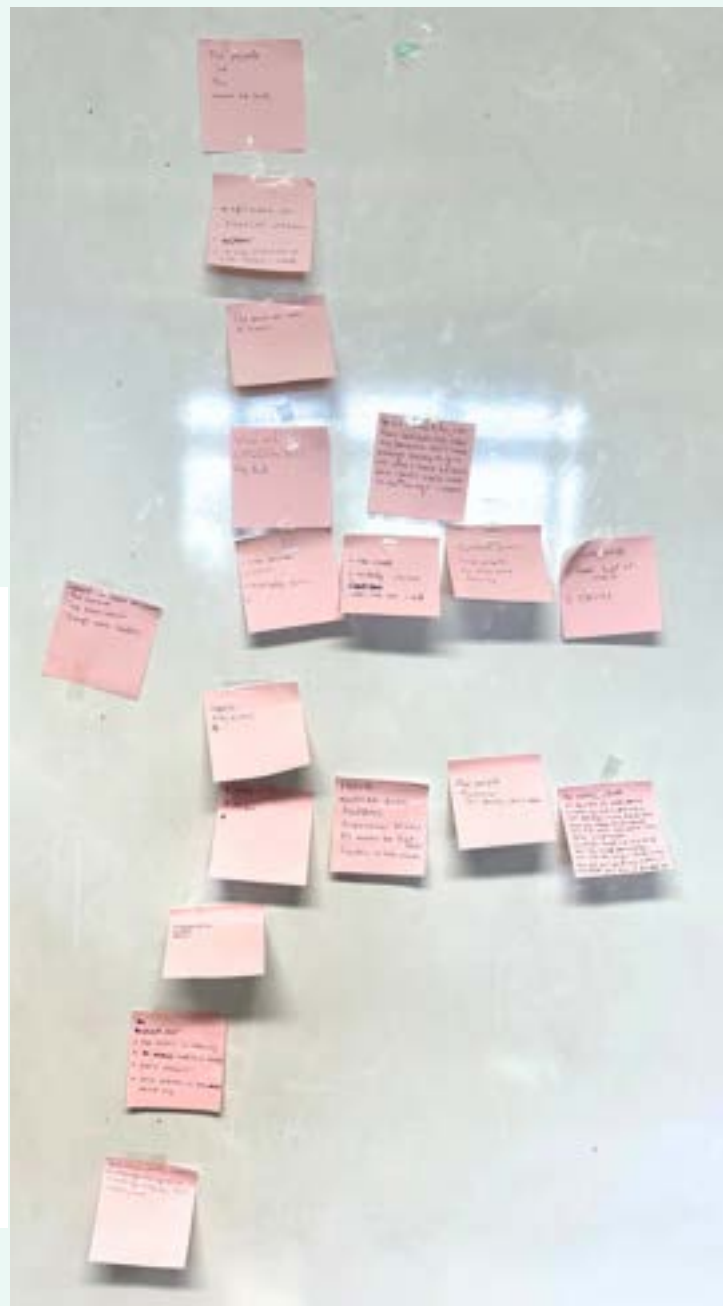


Figure 27: YPAR post-it note responses describing what annoys college students

² Greek coffee culture is centered around the notion that coffee is not just a drink, but an occasion to go out with friends and socialize (History and Evolution of Greek Coffee Culture). This relationship with coffee began when Greece was under the Ottoman Empire. By the 18th century, the first coffee shop, or “kafeneio,” was well-established and served as a basis for social interaction (Charles, 2020). More recently, with the economic crisis, high unemployment rates and record-low incomes forced Greeks to cut back on social activities. Coffee, however, was an affordable leisure activity for many across the country and remains a staple for Greek people.

This data also gave us insight into the types of events the high school and college students would want to attend. These results can be seen in the charts below:

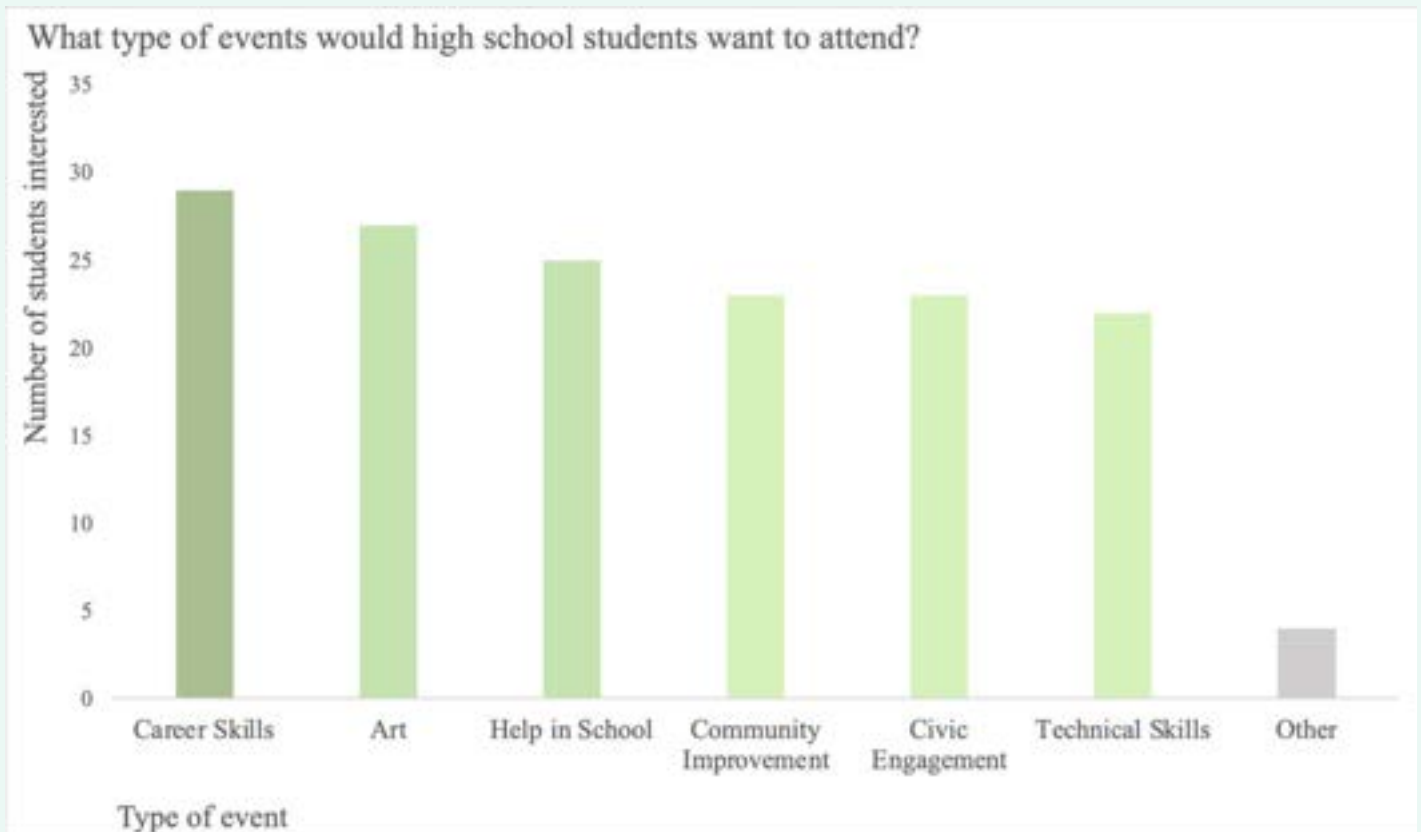


Figure 28: Events high school survey respondents want to attend

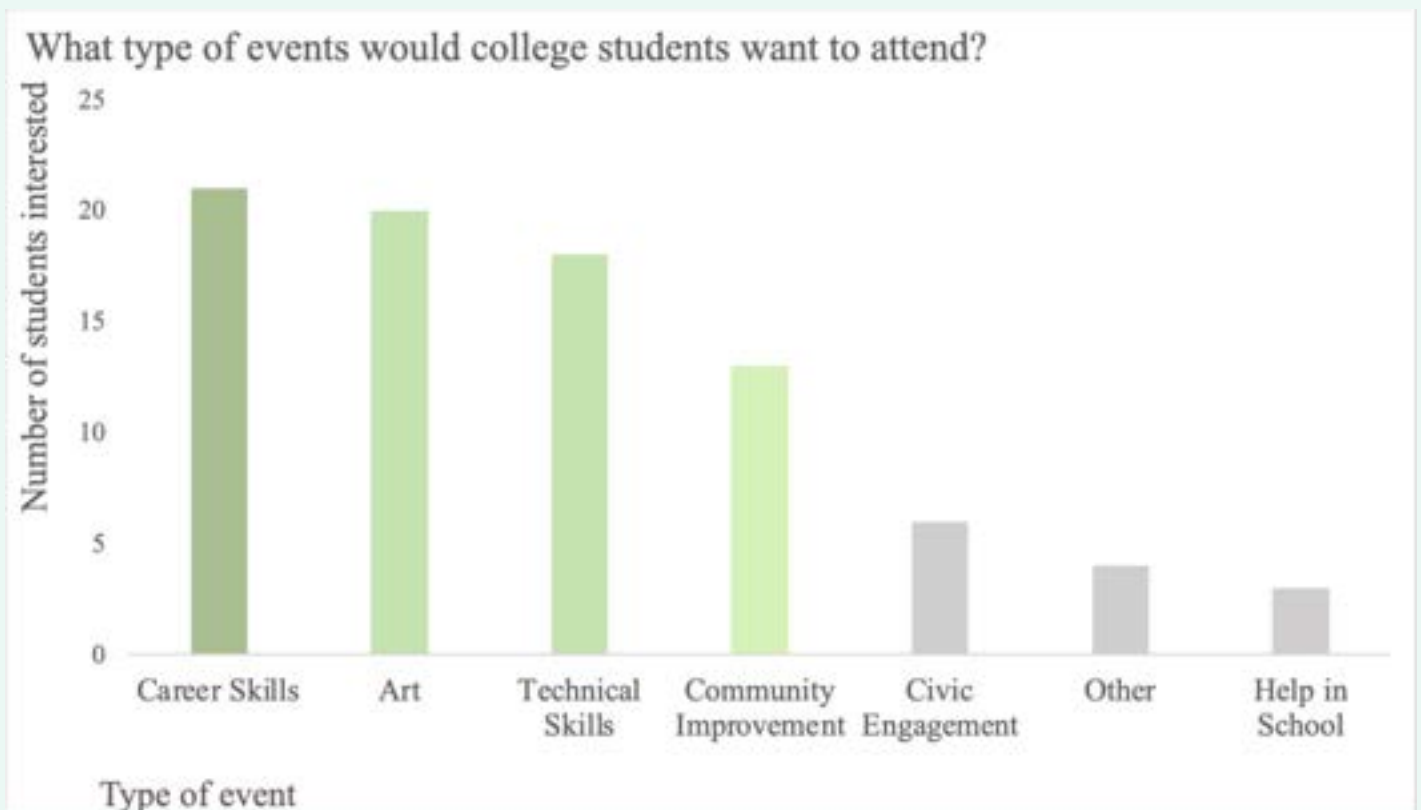


Figure 29: Events college survey respondents want to attend

The two events that received the highest interest from both the high school and technical college students were career skills events, like help with writing a resume or interviewing, and art events, like painting, knitting, etc. Out of the 58 high school respondents, 29 were interested in career skills and 27 in artistic events, and out of the 46 technical college respondents, 21 were interested in career skills and 20 in artistic events. These findings indicate that both technical and college students want help with enhancing their employment opportunities. This makes sense with the high unemployment rates affecting the youth in their difficulties finding or keeping jobs. Since art is a platform of personal and emotional expression, the Thermi youth interest in artistic events suggests the desire for an outlet to share their perspectives through a medium that allows them to articulate and capture their emotions. The next highest category for high school students was help in school or tutoring with 25 responses, and for technical college students was technical or job-related skills with 17 responses. This high percentage for tutoring help correlates with our high school survey results, which indicated that out of the 58 respondents, 54 said they wanted to go to university.

Technical college students are focused on their major, therefore the events that teach them technical or job-related skills will be more beneficial for their knowledge in their desired field. The fourth highest event was community improvement for both high school and technical college students with 12 technical college student responses, and 23 high school student responses. It is evident from our survey results that both the high school and technical college students care about the health and well-being of Thermi. They each expressed interest in wanting to help better their community.

The types of community events the youth in Thermi would be interested in attending were also analyzed based on the youth council's past events. The results for high school students can be seen in the chart below. Out of the 58 total responses, 48 students indicated interest in concerts, 37 indicated interest in blood donations, and 26 indicated interest in tree planting. Concerts combine both socialization and music, which aligns with the students' interests from our survey results. Blood donation and tree planting tie into the youth caring about the health and well-being of their community. These events provide youth members an opportunity to be a part of something bigger than themselves and contribute back.

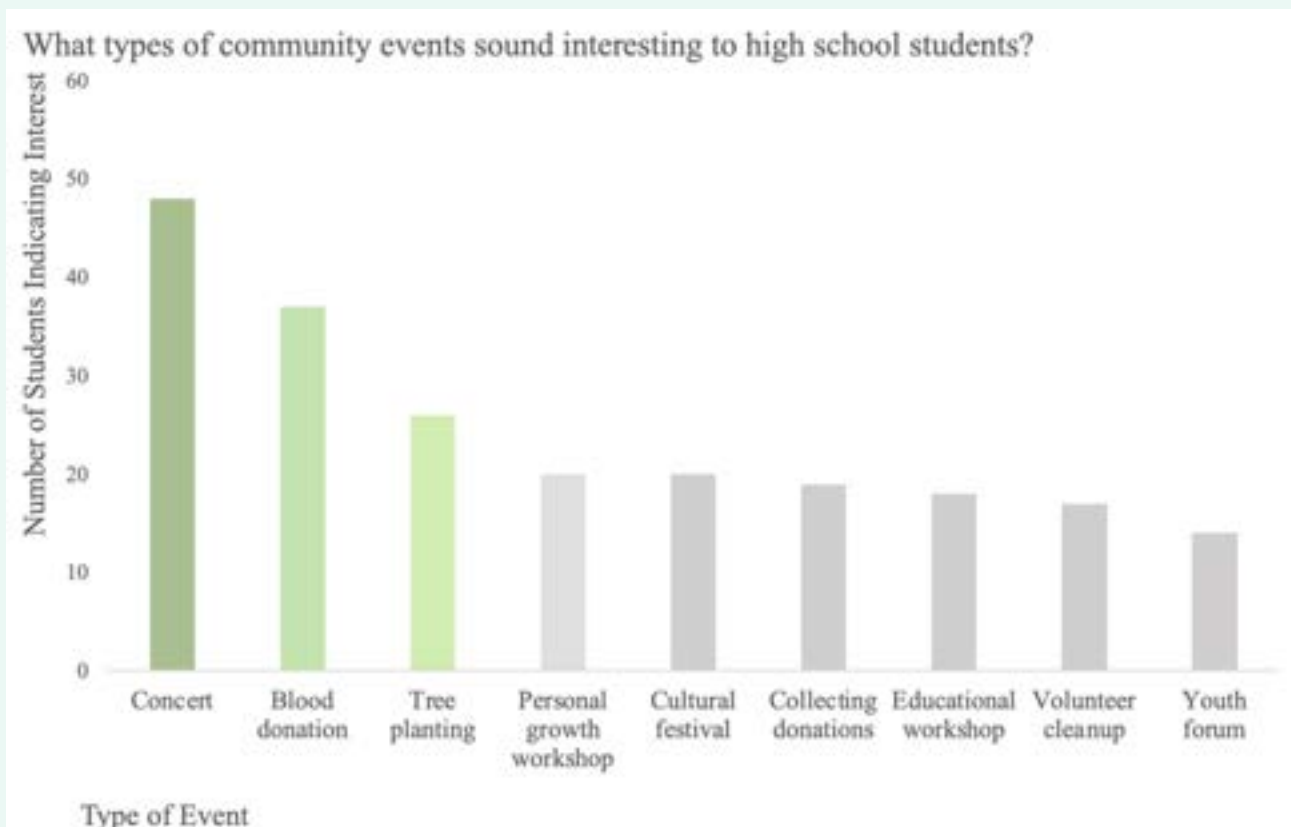


Figure 30: Community events high school students are interested in

Current State of the Thermi Youth Council

Through our interviews with youth council members and the municipal officials who work closely with the council, we identified challenges that the youth council faces as well as the strengths of the council.

Sociocracy has driven away members because it has prevented the implementation of ideas.

Despite the youth council's commitment to sociocracy, it can be a deterrent to potential new members. At the beginning of the youth council, meetings focused on learning how to practice sociocracy as opposed to implementing the ideas of members. Many of the initial council members grew disappointed with the lack of action and events, and this led to their leaving the council.

The current difficulties that the council faces when practicing sociocracy stem from the requirement of unanimous consent. One youth member explained that sociocracy has prevented the council from pursuing more radical ideas because not all members will agree with the proposal. Members who had more radical ideas grew frustrated when their proposals were not accepted by the youth council and stopped their participation. A young adult that we interviewed in Thermi Square anticipated this issue when he learned that the youth council used sociocracy. He expressed hesitation about the process because "when absolutely everyone has to agree, it would slowdown proceedings."

The youth council faces obstacles when trying to recruit new members because of opposition from schools and a lack of initiative from council members.

A recurring theme in our interviews was the limited promotion and recruitment conducted by the Thermi Youth Council. As mentioned in section 2.4 the primary struggle that the Thermi Youth Council faces is a lack of engaged members. The two youth council members whom we spoke with specifically expressed their frustration with the lack of new members.

During our two months in Thermi, the youth council did not prioritize recruitment and outreach. This is a result of external obstacles as well as a lack of initiative from council members. When we asked Chrysa what she thought was driving disengagement with the council, she explained that "we don't make the right promotion". She also expressed frustration that the youth council has not taken her suggestion to run a promotional open call encouraging Thermi youth to join the council. In addition to the lack of initiative, the youth council faces significant opposition from

The problem is that we're not getting new members

IOANNA PAPAFOIYOU

principals and teachers' unions when they attempt to visit local high schools. One youth council member emphasized the extent of the opposition by explaining that “we are not welcome” in the schools. This opposition is of particular concern because research shows that endorsements from trusted adults, such as teachers or principals, influence youth involvement in youth councils (Blanchet-Cohen, 2015).

Many of the youth council’s current outreach methods rely on potential members indicating interest. For example, to join the mailing list and receive notice of upcoming events, a potential member must visit the council’s Instagram account and submit their email through a form. This is an interesting change since the inception of the council. A current member of the youth council explained that she joined the Thermi Youth Council because of a visit that Chrysa made to her high school. Many of the original members of the council were introduced to it through high school visits made by Chrysa, or an open call initiated by her office. However, in the years since the initial promotion, visits were only made to one high school, and no open calls were made. The limited outreach to Thermi youth was apparent in our interviews in Thermi Square. Only two out of sixteen interviewees in the council’s target age group had heard of the council (Figure 31).

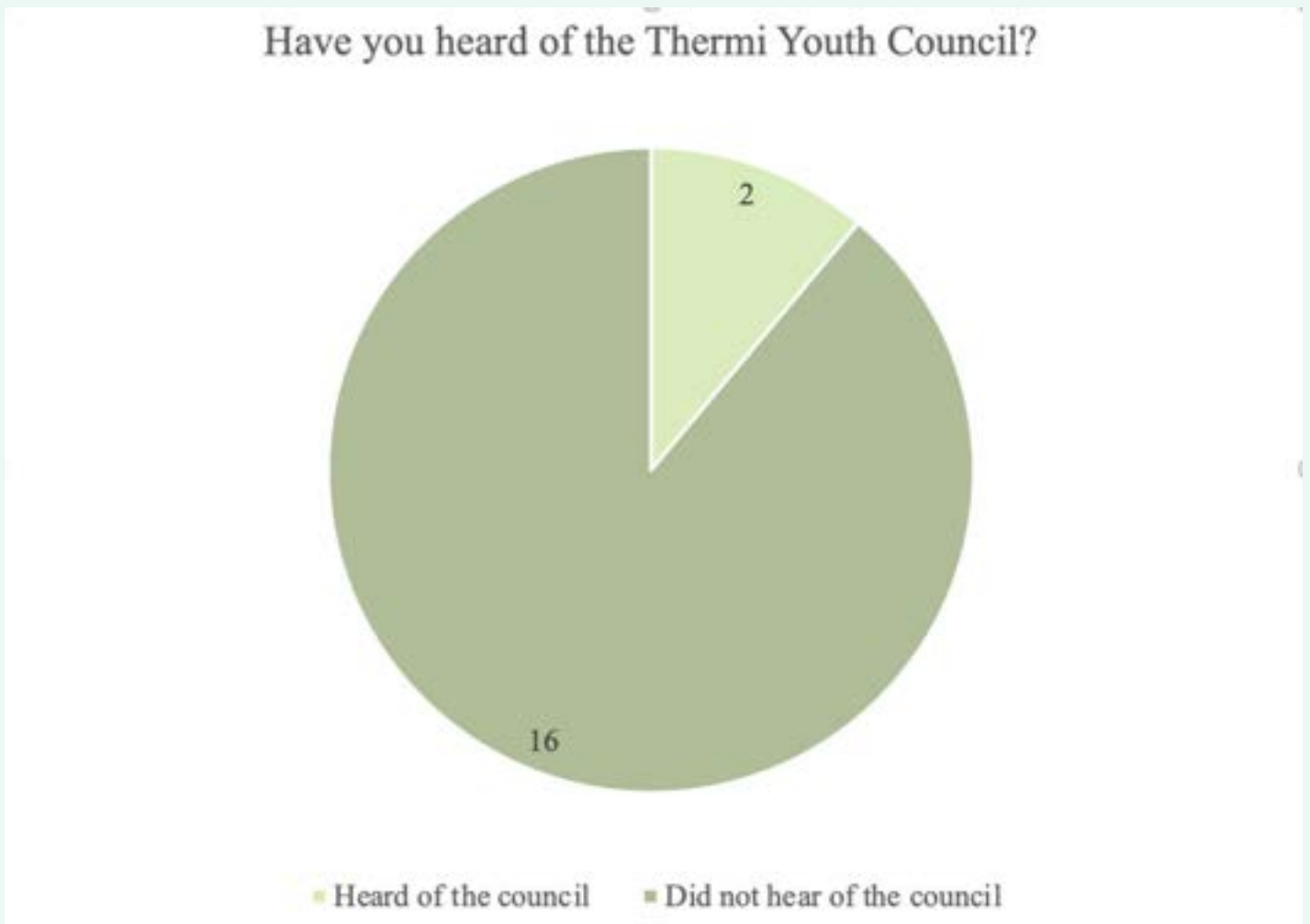


Figure 31: Interview responses to the question "Have you heard of the Thermi Youth Council?"

At the time of our visit, the council had recently distributed posters to the high schools in the municipality of Thermi, and they had spoken to students at the second high school of Thermi. Additionally, there was a promotional event at the central square at which informational pamphlets were distributed to passersby. The same pamphlets were distributed at youth council events that were open to the public, or at events that were held in collaboration with other youth groups. The youth council also maintains an online presence. They have a newsletter that is sent to a mailing list as well as a public website. On Instagram and Facebook, they have run promoted advertisements. However, their social media is not used to promote upcoming events, instead, it reviews recent events, as seen in Figure 32. This means that potential members must subscribe to the mailing list to receive notice of upcoming events.

Current youth council members struggle to find time to commit to the youth council.

The work of the youth council is advanced by a handful of members, which has led to burnout and growing dissatisfaction. Those members who are most involved are seen to have the strongest voices, leading other members to feel undervalued. While sociocracy is intended to prevent such a hierarchal structure, not all members feel equal.

There is also a sense among the youth council members that they are drained because they are required to commit too much of their time. Ioanna, the council's external communications chair, is required to commit the hours of a full-time employee which is difficult for her to maintain. Chara, who previously held the same position and has a close relationship with Ioanna, the council's external communications chair, is required to commit the hours of a full-

time employee which is difficult for her to maintain. Chara, who previously held the same position and has a close relationship with Ioanna, worries that Ioanna is on the verge of burnout because of the demands of her role. This strain is felt even amongst general body members who devote around four hours per week to the council. The members who we spoke with hoped to decrease their responsibilities by distributing their workload more evenly across council members, especially once the council has more members.



Figure 32: A post from the Thermi Youth Council Instagram reviewing a past event (Thermi Youth Council, 2022)

The youth council benefits from its strong relationship with the Municipality of Thermi but this may deter new members from joining.

Chara Kokkali believes that one of the Thermi Youth Council's biggest strengths is "the help of the people from the vice mayorship office – Chrysa's help, Vasilis's help, the Vice Mayor's support...for [her] the relationships are strong." In our two months in Thermi, we noticed that Chrysa Klimatsouda and Vasilis Chrimatopoulos are very present in their events and helpful in youth council events; they traveled to Sweden with two council members to attend an SAYouth workshop to discuss project activities and evaluate the construction of a digital communication tool. Chrysa Klimatsouda and Vasilis Chrimatopoulos also speak very highly of the youth council. Chrysa Klimatsouda expressed her love for working with the youth council, admires how many skills the members have, and how dedicated and outspoken the youth council members are. Vasilis Chrimatopoulos supported this in expressing how nice it is to see young people engaged and motivated to make a better future for themselves.

The Thermi Youth Council has a budget dedicated to it and its events. Chrysa Klimatsouda created this budget based on their past events, so she was able to approximate how much money the youth council would need for their events throughout the year. This made the event-planning process much less complicated and time-consuming, as now the youth council knows there will be enough money for events before members start making plans. Before the budget, members would get frustrated when their events could not be funded by the municipality, and this even resulted in a few members leaving the youth council. Chrysa Klimatsouda's work to create this budget provides another example for how

she supports the youth council. We also learned that the youth council submits all event proposals to Chrysa Klimatsouda and she approves all proposals as long as there is money left in the budget. The approximation for their budget was very accurate since the council has not proposed any events that would require the budget to be extended.

Chrysa Klimatsouda also supports the youth council in providing opportunities for possible events. She has many connections – the mayor, school principals, and other municipal officials – as a municipal employee in the Department of Education so this is very helpful in creating ideas for events. While we were in Greece, Chrysa Klimatsouda discovered an opportunity for the youth council to collaborate with a local high school to collect and sell second-hand clothes to raise funds for the school's technology committee. The youth council adheres to many of her ideas, but she expressed concern that the youth consented to her ideas despite not liking them because they were reluctant to disagree. Chrysa Klimatsouda knows the members well enough now to recognize their hesitation, and she urges them to tell her about their issues with her ideas so she can better understand. Despite this, she believes they communicate very well and always work to come to a solution together.

Both Chara Kokkali and Ioanna Papafotiou stated that they have benefitted from being in the youth council because they have learned about government operations. However, neither mentioned inciting the municipality to consider issues affecting young people. The Network of Youth Engagement – a youth organization with the same goal to enhance youth civic engagement based in Katerini, Greece – has tried "through targeted interventions to contribute to the revision of local authorities' priorities on youth issues" (Giota, n.d.). The members did not mention any

initiatives they have taken to advance a youth agenda and include youth voices in local politics. This contrasts with the Network of Youth Engagement's efforts as the youth council members did not discuss actively trying to revise policies to benefit the youth.

The Thermi Youth Council's close affiliation with the municipality follows the best practices for youth engagement in municipal government found by Ausberger, as they have the support from a political leader, the Vice Mayor, and have a municipal staff member involved in their operations. Although this contributes to the council's success, this may deter new members from joining. Through our activities and discussions with the local youth, we learned that there is a widespread mistrust of the government. Students asserted that they believe the government does not listen to people's concerns as there have been protests on various issues for many years, yet no changes have been made to address them. There was a sense of helplessness among the youth regarding politics, leading to the idea that the youth do not want to be associated with a government they believe does not value their concerns. Chara Kokkali supports this in saying that she believes some young people avoid joining because they believe the youth council is too closely affiliated with the municipal government that they are worried their actions "will show off as an achievement to the mayor, and not as an achievement to the council." This provides a possible explanation for the disinterest in the youth council among local youth, as they do not want their efforts to be attributed to a government they do not trust.

Current Thermi Youth Council members express feelings of fulfillment from their participation.

The youth council members we spoke to agreed that they enjoy participating and would not change anything about the group other than

increasing membership. Chara Kokkali and Ioanna Papafotiou both joined the youth council at its creation because they wanted to better Thermi, and they believe they have successfully improved their community through the youth council's events. Chara has also learned that "even something small can make a change" – she believes that the existence of the youth council is even a change because there are currently only 9 councils in Greece. She asserted that if the youth council has a private event, such as tree-planting, passersby may not notice a change, but she is still aware of how she is helping her community, and this makes her feel fulfilled. Ioanna Papafotiou expressed a similar feeling – she now feels as if she has the power to make changes in her community because of the council. The council provided her with a reminder that there is still hope for young people in Greece even in times of hardship.

Vasilis Chrimatopoulos supported this in saying youth getting involved "creates a more normal and promising environment for the future because young people are taking interest in the economy and politics." All interviewees, Chara Kokkali, Ioanna Papafotiou, Vasilis Chrimatopoulos, and Chrysa Klimatsouda, agreed that the youth council's most successful event was its Youth Forum, held in May 2022. They attributed the perceived success to the fact that the event encouraged youth to express their ideas on various important topics, including climate change and gender equality. However, this event still did not allow young people to revise current policies and have a say in their local government. Hugh Matthews, a professor of geography at the University of Northampton, suggests in his study *Citizenship, Youth Councils and Young People's Participation* that "there is a danger that youth councils, if not carefully constituted, become little more than sounding boxes capable of making considerable clamour but without the means to bring about change." When young people express their ideas but do not see

change come from it, this may discourage them from civic engagement as they feel their efforts and ideas are not valued.

Thermi Youth Council members also get a chance to meet new people, which Chara Kokkali views as fulfilling since she is a very social person. Youth council members now have the chance to interact and form friendships with people from other villages in Thermi which they had no opportunity to meet before; Chara Kokkali told us she has become very close with other members.

However, literature suggests “the tendency for youth forums to develop into a close-knit group of friends poses significant barriers to the involvement of all young people” as new members may feel like ‘outsiders’ among an established group (Matthews, 2001). Although extroverted long-time members feel more socially fulfilled by their friendships within the council, this may be a contributing factor for the decline in new members.



Recommendations

Through our interviews, activities, and surveys with young people in Thermi, our team determined factors that may be contributing to the decline in interest in the Thermi Youth Council. In these recommendations, we identify opportunities to increase youth civic engagement and attract more members to the youth council.

Recommendation	Action Plan	Expected Outcome
<p>Advertise the Thermi Youth Council to local youth</p>	<p>Chrysa, Vasilis, and youth council members set up visits to schools or public events in the Thermi Cultural Center to inform local young people about the youth council. Presentations should describe the council's purpose, operations, and benefits of being a member. Ideally, this would take place twice a year.</p>	<p>More young people will be aware of the council and those interested in joining will have the information they need to become a member.</p>
<p>Create a youth council position responsible for recruitment</p>	<p>There should be a new position focused on advertising and recruitment. This position would be responsible for posting promotional material on the youth council's Instagram and Facebook, as well as planning events at schools or in public Thermi buildings to increase the number of people who know about the youth council.</p>	<p>Recruitment and advertising can be pursued without Chrysa, Vasilis, or other youth council members having to take on more responsibilities. More citizens of Thermi will be aware of the youth council and may consider joining.</p>
<p>Incorporate the interests of young people into youth council events</p>	<p>The youth council should plan public events that involve socializing, physical activity, and art. It would be beneficial to create flyers to promote these events and display them in schools as students indicated interest in them. These events could be done in collaboration with other local organizations.</p>	<p>This will create a heightened sense of community as Thermi youth will be able to connect with their peers based on a shared interest. Hosting non-political events will differentiate the youth council from the government.</p>

Recommendations

Recommendation	Action Plan	Expected Outcome
<p>Create committees in the youth council based on area of interest</p>	<p>The council should create new circles that are organized by areas of interest rather than village of origin. Sociocracy can be used in these circles as well, and there will be a representative chosen to attend general circle meetings.</p>	<p>Youth council members can meet new people from other villages in Thermi and focus on their passions. This would lessen time commitment which may attract more members and decrease feelings of burnout.</p>
<p>Swap members of the Thermi Youth Council with members of the Thessaloniki Youth Council</p>	<p>The President of the Thessaloniki Youth Council expressed interest in a membership swap with the Thermi Youth Council. The swapped members would participate in meetings, decision-making, and events within the other council for a designated period. After, the two councils would meet and have the members to share their experiences and discuss what went well and what could be improved. Both councils then have the opportunity to discuss effective ways to better their respective councils.</p>	<p>The two youth councils will be able to share their ideas and work together to construct more efficient and effective processes that promote higher activity and participation within each council. This will also allow members to form connections with members from a different council.</p>
<p>Host more career skills workshops for the youth</p>	<p>Based on our survey results, both the technical college and high school students expressed the most interest in attending events that helped with career skills, such as resume writing or interviewing workshops.</p>	<p>These workshops will give the youth opportunities to expand their professional skills, which will help them towards their future careers. This will also be beneficial for promoting the youth council since these workshops will attract potential members.</p>

Conclusion

Through our YPAR activities, interviews, and surveys we came to realize that young people in Thermi care immensely about their villages. They enjoy the natural beauty of the region and have a desire to improve their community. However, over the course of our project, we discovered themes that prevent the youth of Thermi from engaging in organizations such as the youth council which has projects focused on accomplishing that task. These were mistrust of government, a lack of transportation, and a need to leave Greece. These factors impact the daily lives of members of the community and provide the context necessary to analyze the membership decrease in the youth council. We hope that providing this knowledge to the youth council will allow them to understand the needs of the youth and make the changes needed to increase their membership. Furthermore, knowing the struggles of the youth can be beneficial to other organizations that are facing similar troubles in the municipality.



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Appendix A: General Interview Protocol

Considerations:

Sample Interview Format:

Interview with _____

Date:

Time:

Location:

Attendees:

Introduction:

Hello _____,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. We are _____, students at WPI in the U.S. We are working with the members of the Thermi Youth Council to determine the current state of its membership and determine areas of improvement. We would like to interview you all on your views of the youth council as well as what you would like to see from it in the future.

Do we have your permission to record this interview on our phones to make sure we capture your responses accurately? We will transcribe that recording and keep the transcription confidential and securely in our possession. We will erase the tape after transcribing it. If you would prefer that we do not record the interview, it's perfectly fine, we can just take notes instead.

Our university requires that we compile our project research in a final report that will be published online by WPI. We can also email the report to you if you wish. Do we have permission to quote you in this report? If not, would you prefer to remain unidentified?

Also, can we quote this interview in our report? Whatever you tell us can be confidential or anonymous, based on your comfort levels.

Questions:

Conclusion:

Thank you so much for talking with us today. Is there anything else you'd like to discuss? Or something that we have missed? Let's dive in. Would you like to review the transcript of the interview? Thank you so much for meeting with us today. If there is anything else that you would like to add to the interview, please reach out to us at (emails/phone numbers) or you can contact the Thermi Recreation Department (Contact info).

Appendix B: Municipal Officials Interview Questions

1	<p>Do we have your permission to record this interview on our phones to make sure we capture your responses accurately? We will transcribe that recording and keep the transcription confidential and securely in our possession. We will erase the tape after transcribing it. If you would prefer that we do not record the interview, it's perfectly fine, we can just take notes instead.</p> <p>Our university requires that we compile our project research in a final report that will be published online by WPI. We can also email the report to you if you wish. Do we have permission to quote you in this report?</p>
2	What was the reasoning behind the formation of the youth council?
3	<p>What youth engagement activities does the municipality support (outside of the youth council)?</p> <p>How have other youth programs run by the municipality done in comparison to the youth council?</p>
4	What factors do you think have influenced the emergence and growth of youth councils in Greece?
5	Why does the municipality see the youth council as a method of youth engagement?
6	Can you describe how the youth council helps the municipality?
7	How does the municipality support the youth council?
8	Was there a youth council event that stood out as very successful to you?
9	What do you enjoy about working with the youth council?
10	What obstacles do you face when working with the council?
11	<p>What factors do you think have influenced the decline of the Thermi youth council?</p> <p>What factors do you think have contributed to broader youth engagement issues in Thermi?</p>
12	Do you have any ideas of how to fix these things?
13	Is there anything else you think we should know?

Appendix C: Youth Council Member Interview Questions



1	Do we have your permission to record this interview? Is it okay if we use your name in our report?
2	When did you join the youth council?
3	Why did you join the youth council?
4	What is your position in the youth council?
5	How much time do you dedicate to the council each week?
6	What do you enjoy about being in the youth council?
7	What would you say is the youth council's biggest strength?
8	How have you benefited from being in the youth council?
9	Does the youth council work with any other youth organizations? If so, how?
10	Is there anything you would like to change about the youth council?
11	Was the decline in participation sudden or gradual? Do you have any ideas as to why this happened?
12	How has the youth council been affected by the decreased participation?
13	Can you provide an example of a time the youth council successfully came together for an event during the pandemic? What about after the pandemic?
14	Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the youth council?

Appendix D: General Greek Youth Interview Questions

	Interview Questions
1	How old are you? Do we have your permission to record this interview?
2	Where do you live? How long have you lived there?
3	Are you in school or working? For school: Where do you go? What do you study? For working: What do you do?
4	What do you do in your free time? What are your hobbies?
5	Are or <u>were</u> you a member of any teams or clubs? Why did you join this team or club? If left: Why did you leave this team or club?
6	What annoys you in your daily life? Do you think there's anything that can be done to address these issues?
7	Have you heard of the Thermi Youth Council? If no, we will give an overview of the youth <u>council</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a youth group that collaborates with the Municipality of Thermi. Members are between 15 and 29 years old and live or work in Thermi. • They better the municipality with events like park cleaning and giving supplies to children. • They also host fun events like a cultural <u>festival</u> • They use sociocracy when working. This means that everyone <u>has to</u> agree before anything happens. Based on this information, what about the youth council sounds good to you? What does not sound good?
8	Is there anything that would prevent you from joining the Youth Council?
9	Would you want to be invited to a follow-up group discussion? Present QR Code if yes.

Appendix E: YPAR

Games and Activities

E-1 Examples of YPAR interactive games and activities

Interactive games and activities for the general youth:

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to meet with us! I am ____ (say names), and we are students at a university in America. We are working with the members of the Thermi Youth Council to help increase membership and determine areas of improvement and are here to better understand your interests, experiences, and perspectives.

- E - 1.1 Games to elicit reason:
 - Post-it note game;
 - “For this activity, we are going to say a prompt and you will write a response to that prompt on a post-it note. You can write as much or as little as you want. These responses will be kept anonymous. Once you are done, you can put your post-it on the white board. Are there any questions before we start?”
- Game 1:
 - Prompts (5 mins to write, 5 mins to observe)
 - What is something that annoys you in your daily life;
 - Debrief questions (10 mins)
 - What do you see here;
 - Why do you think that is;
 - What clusters do you see;
 - Why do you think certain responses written more;
 - What can be done to address these issues;
- Game 2:
 - Prompts (5 mins to write, 5 mins to observe)
 - (2 separate post-it notes)
 - What are your favorite activities to do;
 - What teams/clubs have you been/are you a part of;
 - Write if you are still a part of that group;
 - Why do you stay in these groups;
 - Debrief questions (10 mins)
 - What clusters do you see;
 - Does this surprise anyone;
 - Why do you think certain responses were written more;

- **E - 1.2 Art Depiction**

- Supplies:
 - Blank white paper
 - Pencils/pens/markers
- Instructions:
 - Students will have 5 minutes to create something based on the prompt. You can draw, tear the paper, write on it or not, or build something.
- Prompt:
 - “Create something that conveys”;
 - “Take one minute to think about what you will create.
 - “When you are ready, take 5 minutes to respond to the prompt.”
 - Have each individual share with the group what they made.
- Debrief questions:
 - Why did you choose this moment specifically;
 - Were there other experiences you also thought of sharing;
 - Is there anything that surprises you about these drawings;
 - What has changed since then;

- **E - 1.3 Photo elicitation**

- Instructions
 - Send participants a link prior to the activity so they have time to choose or take pictures. Have them submit one or two photos in response to the prompt. During the session, each participant will go over what photo they took/submitted and its significance to the prompt and them.
- Photo sharing prompt:
 - Take a picture that describes your feelings about living, working, or going to school in Thermi.

E-2 Examples of general facilitating debrief questions to encourage further discussion

- Does anyone have anything they would like to add;
- What are some things we have not yet considered;
- Is this discussion raising questions for anyone;
- Can anyone play devil’s advocate for a few minutes;
- After listening to the previous speakers, does anyone have any questions for them;

Appendix F: Thermi Square Flyer



Appendix G: Consent Form for Participants Under 18

Συμφωνία ενημερωμένης συναίνεσης για συμμετοχή σε ερευνητική μελέτη

Ερευνητές: Ryan Powers, Mikaela Milch, Abigail Barksdale, Erika Varady.

Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας: gr-gpc23_youth@wpi.edu

Τίτλος Ερευνητικής Μελέτης: Αναζωογόνηση του Συμβουλίου Νεολαίας, Θέρμης

Χορηγός: Δήμος Θέρμης

Εισαγωγή:

Το παιδί σας καλείται να συμμετάσχει σε μια ερευνητική μελέτη. Ωστόσο, προτού συμφωνήσετε, πρέπει να ενημερωθείτε πλήρως για το σκοπό της μελέτης, τις διαδικασίες που πρέπει να ακολουθηθούν και τυχόν οφέλη, κινδύνους ή ενόχληση που μπορεί να αντιμετωπίσετε ως αποτέλεσμα της συμμετοχής σας. Αυτή η φόρμα παρουσιάζει πληροφορίες σχετικά με τη μελέτη, ώστε να μπορείτε να πάρετε μια πλήρως τεκμηριωμένη απόφαση σχετικά με τη συμμετοχή σας.

Σκοπός της μελέτης: Ο Δήμος Θέρμης θέλει να αυξήσει τη συμμετοχή στο συμβούλιο νεολαίας. Αυτή η μελέτη ξεκινά αυτή τη διαδικασία συλλέγοντας πληροφορίες για τα επίπεδα ενδιαφέροντος και συμμετοχής στο Συμβούλιο Νεολαίας Θέρμης.

Διαδικασίες που πρέπει να ακολουθηθούν: Οι ομαδικές συνεντεύξεις θα πραγματοποιηθούν εκτός σχολικών ωρών και δεν θα διαρκέσουν περισσότερο από μία ώρα. Οι ομάδες δεν θα είναι μεγαλύτερες από 30 άτομα.

Κίνδυνοι για τους συμμετέχοντες στη μελέτη: Μπορεί να υπάρχει δυσφορία από τη συνέντευξη από έναν μη Έλληνα ομιλήτη. Ωστόσο, θα υπάρχει διαθέσιμος μεταφραστής.

Οφέλη για τους συμμετέχοντες στην έρευνα και για άλλους: Δεν υπάρχουν αναμενόμενα οφέλη για κανένα άτομο κατά τη διάρκεια της ερευνητικής μελέτης.

Τήρηση αρχείων και εμπιστευτικότητα: Όλες οι συνεντεύξεις θα καταγράφονται και/ή θα καταγράφονται και θα διατηρούνται εμπιστευτικές. Τα αρχεία της συμμετοχής του παιδιού σας σε αυτή τη μελέτη θα τηρούνται εμπιστευτικά στο βαθμό που επιτρέπεται από τη νομοθεσία.

Ωστόσο, οι ερευνητές της μελέτης, ο χορηγός ή ο εξουσιοδοτημένος του και, υπό ορισμένες συνθήκες, η Επιτροπή Ιδρυματικής Αναθεώρησης του Πολυτεχνείου του Worcester (WPI IRB) θα μπορούν να επιθεωρήσουν και να έχουν πρόσβαση σε εμπιστευτικά δεδομένα που σας προσδιορίζουν ονομαστικά. Οποιαδήποτε δημοσίευση ή παρουσίαση των δεδομένων δεν θα σας ταυτοποιήσει.

Αποζημίωση ή θεραπεία σε περίπτωση τραυματισμού: Υπάρχουν ελάχιστοι κίνδυνοι τραυματισμού κατά τη διάρκεια της μελέτης. Δεν εγκαταλείπετε κανένα από τα νόμιμα δικαιώματά σας με την υπογραφή αυτής της δήλωσης.

Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες σχετικά με αυτήν την έρευνα ή σχετικά με τα δικαιώματα των συμμετεχόντων στην έρευνα ή σε περίπτωση τραυματισμού που σχετίζεται με την έρευνα, επικοινωνήστε με το παραπάνω email. Επιπλέον, μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε με τον διαχειριστή IRB (Ruth McKeogh, Τηλ. 508 831- 6699, Email: irb@wpi.edu) ή με τον Διαχειριστή Ανθρώπινης Προστασίας (Gabriel Johnson, Τηλ. 508-831-4989, Email: gjohnson@wpi.edu)

Η συμμετοχή του παιδιού σας σε αυτήν την έρευνα είναι εθελοντική. Η άρνησή σας να συμμετάσχει το παιδί σας δεν θα έχει ως αποτέλεσμα καμία κύρωση για εσάς ή απώλεια παροχών που διαφορετικά δικαιούστε. Το παιδί σας μπορεί να αποφασίσει να σταματήσει να συμμετέχει στην έρευνα ανά πάσα στιγμή χωρίς κυρώσεις ή απώλεια άλλων οφελών. Οι ερευνητές του έργου διατηρούν το δικαίωμα να ακυρώσουν ή να αναβάλουν τις πειραματικές διαδικασίες όποτε κρίνουν σκόπιμο.

Με την υπογραφή παρακάτω, αναγνωρίζετε ότι έχετε ενημερωθεί και συναίνετε στο να συμμετέχει το παιδί σας στη μελέτη που περιγράφεται παραπάνω. Βεβαιωθείτε ότι οι ερωτήσεις σας έχουν απαντηθεί με ικανοποίηση πριν υπογράψετε. Έχετε το δικαίωμα να διατηρήσετε ένα αντίγραφο αυτής της συμφωνίας συναίνεσης.

_____ ημερομηνία: _____

Υπογραφή γονέα

 Ονομα παιδιού (Παρακαλώ εκτυπώστε)

Appendix H: High School Survey Questions

1. Please read the informed consent agreement. By signing below, you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that any questions you have are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement. Choose "yes" to consent and continue the survey
2. Our university requires that we compile our project research in a final report that will be published online by WPI. Do we have permission to quote you in this report? Under no circumstances will we use your name in our report.
3. How old are you?
4. Where do you live?
5. How would you describe your gender?
6. On average, how many hours of free time do you have during the week? Example: 10
7. Do you want to go to university?
8. What do you do in your free time? Select all that apply. Use the "other" option to give an answer that isn't listed
9. What types of municipal events sound interesting to you?
10. What type of events would you attend? Use the "other" option to give an answer that isn't listed
11. Are you interested in politics?
12. Rate the following statements on how much you agree
 - a. I wish I lived in another country
 - b. I want to be a part of a political movement
 - c. I am struggling in school
 - d. I wish I had a mentor to help me
 - e. I would never want to work with the Thermi government
 - f. I will move out of Greece
 - g. I care about the health of my village
13. Do you want to be invited to a follow-up group discussion on another day?

Appendix I: Technical College Survey Questions

1. Please read the informed consent agreement. By signing below, you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that any questions you have are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement. Choose "yes" to consent and continue the survey.
2. Our university requires that we compile our project research in a final report that will be published online by WPI. Do we have permission to quote you in this report? Under no circumstances will we use your name in our report.
3. How old are you?
4. Where do you live?
5. How would you describe your gender?
6. What are you studying?
7. What do you do in your free time? Select all that apply. Use the "other" option to give an answer that isn't listed
8. What type of events would you want to attend? Use the "other" option to give an answer that isn't listed
9. Rate the following statements on how much you agree
 - a. I wish I lived in another country
 - b. I want to be a part of a political movement
 - c. I am struggling in school
 - d. I wish I had a mentor to help me
 - e. I would never want to work with the Thermi government
 - f. I will move out of Greece
 - g. I care about the health of my village
10. Do you want to be invited to a follow-up group discussion on another day?

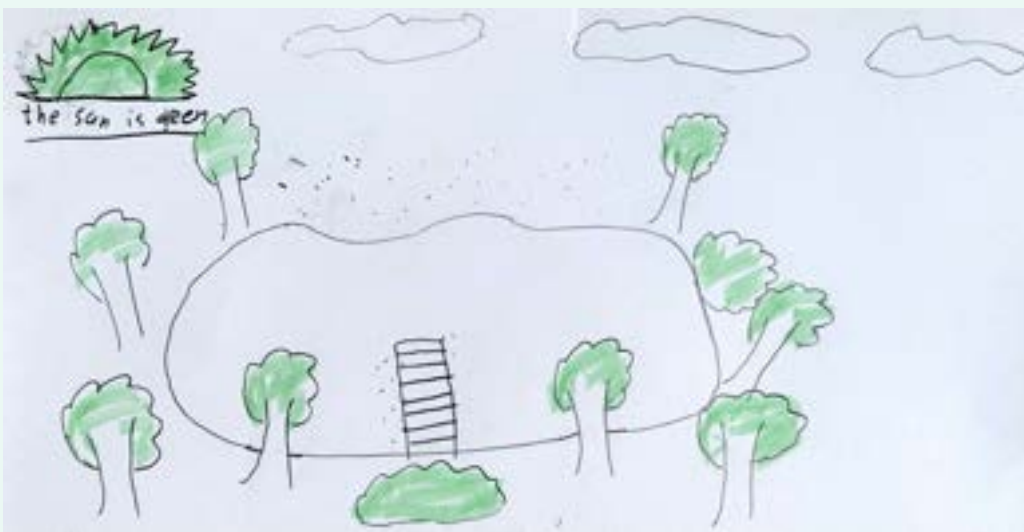
Appendix J: Youth Organization Interview Questions

1	Do we have your permission to record this interview? Is it okay if we use your name in our report?
2	What does your organization do?
3	How often do you have events? What are some examples of the types of events you do? How does your organization decide what events to do?
4	Who are your members? Is it a set membership, or do they collaborate a lot with other groups?
5	How many members do you have? How long do members stay in the organization? Do all members come to events? Do some members participate more than others? Why do you think this is? Have any members left recently? What are some common reasons for this?
6	How do you recruit new members? Does this work well for you? Is there anything else you wish you were doing?
7	What other groups do you collaborate with? How do you collaborate with them?
8	How familiar are you with the Thermi youth council? What do you think about the council? What do you think the council does well? What do you think they can do better?

Appendix K: Art Depiction Results



"There is only a few people leading, not considering the opinion of the others, or how to better their land and just looking at us for opportunities to further the gap between them and us." - High school student



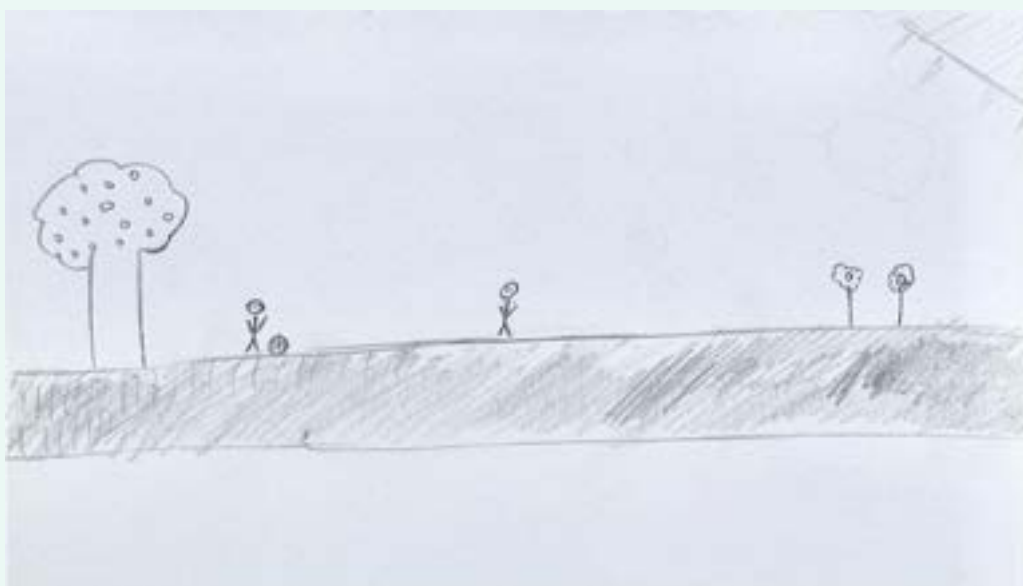
"I drew the lake of Thermi that has a lot of trees, bushes, and grass around it. It is a very beautiful place that makes everyone that visits it feel free and happy to be there. You have to visit it." - High school student



"This is the technical lake of Municipality of Thermi. Many people gather here to have fun and relax or the have good times in holidays." - High school student



"I feel seen from my Municipality. They care both for the people that lives in here, but also they care for the nature." - High school student



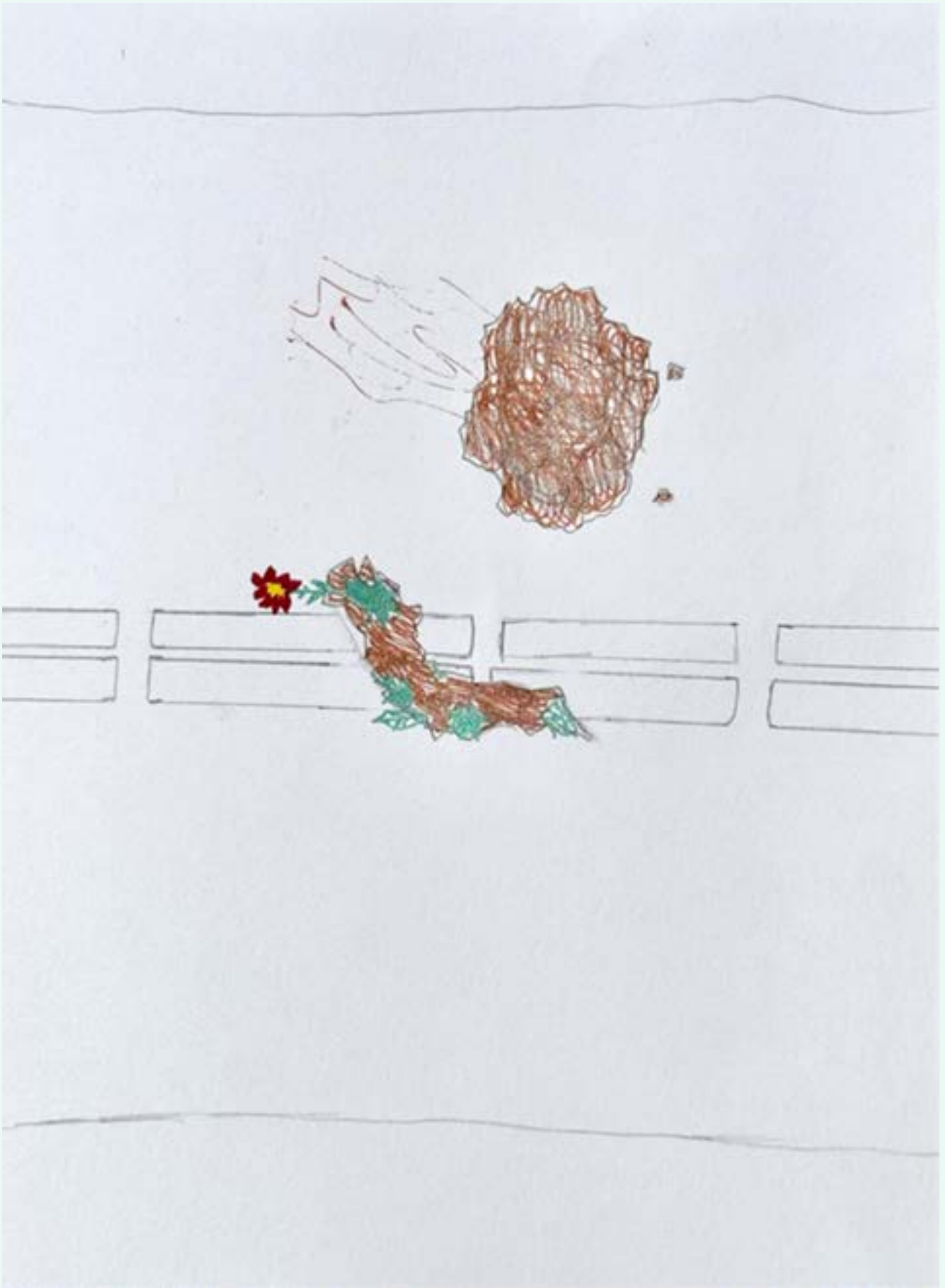
"There are 2 kids in the nature playing football and having fun with each other. In conclusion, Thermi is a place where kids are having fun and they have a lot of things to do in the nature." - High school student



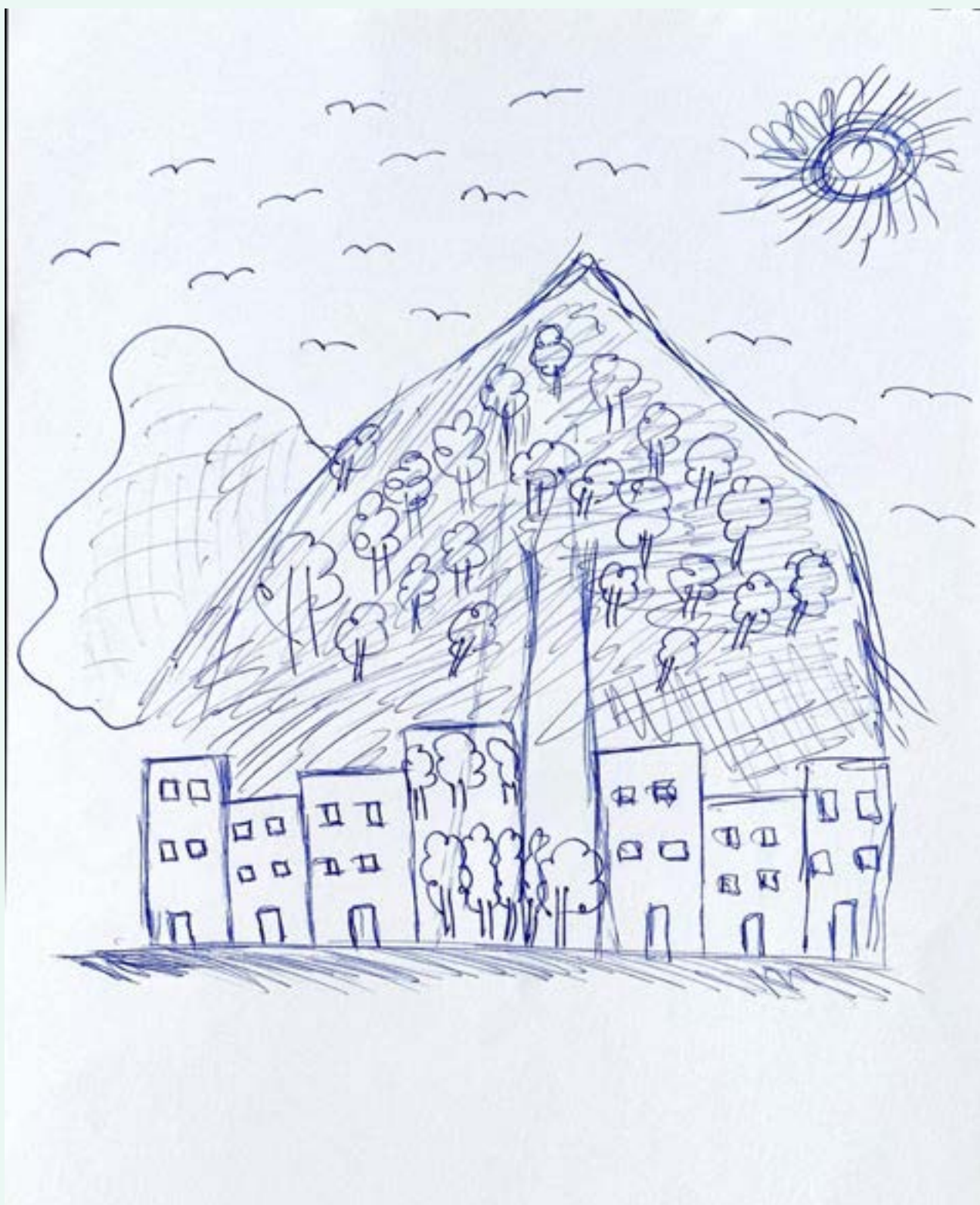
"I decide to draw a tree. I did that because dimos thermis is close to the environment. I draw it because I think the trees are the oxygen and the clean air we need to live." - High school student



"It's a picture of a sunrise above our city. I like trees. PS: There was no yellow." - High school student



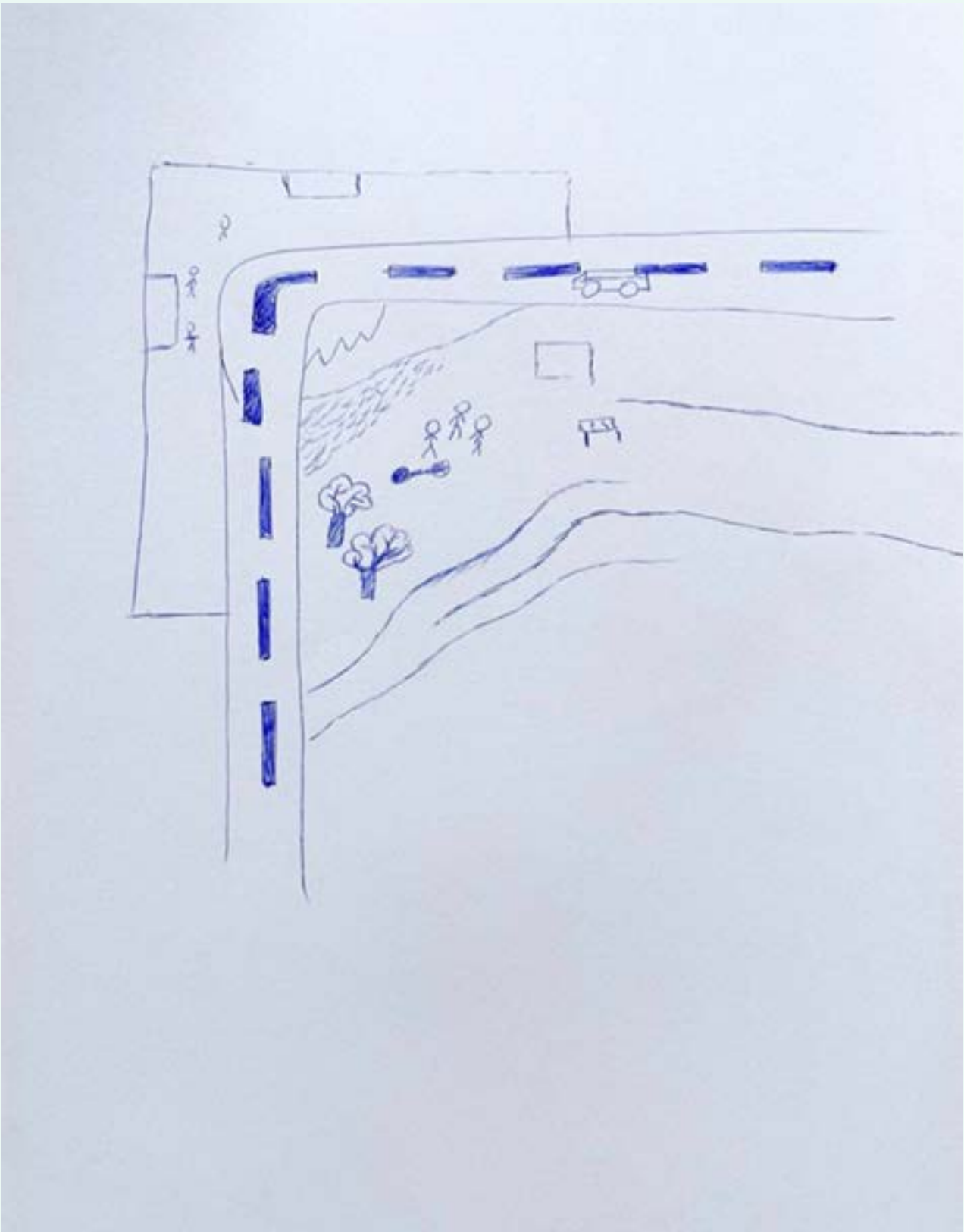
"This road represents a road in Thermi, where there are holes and cracks." - High school student



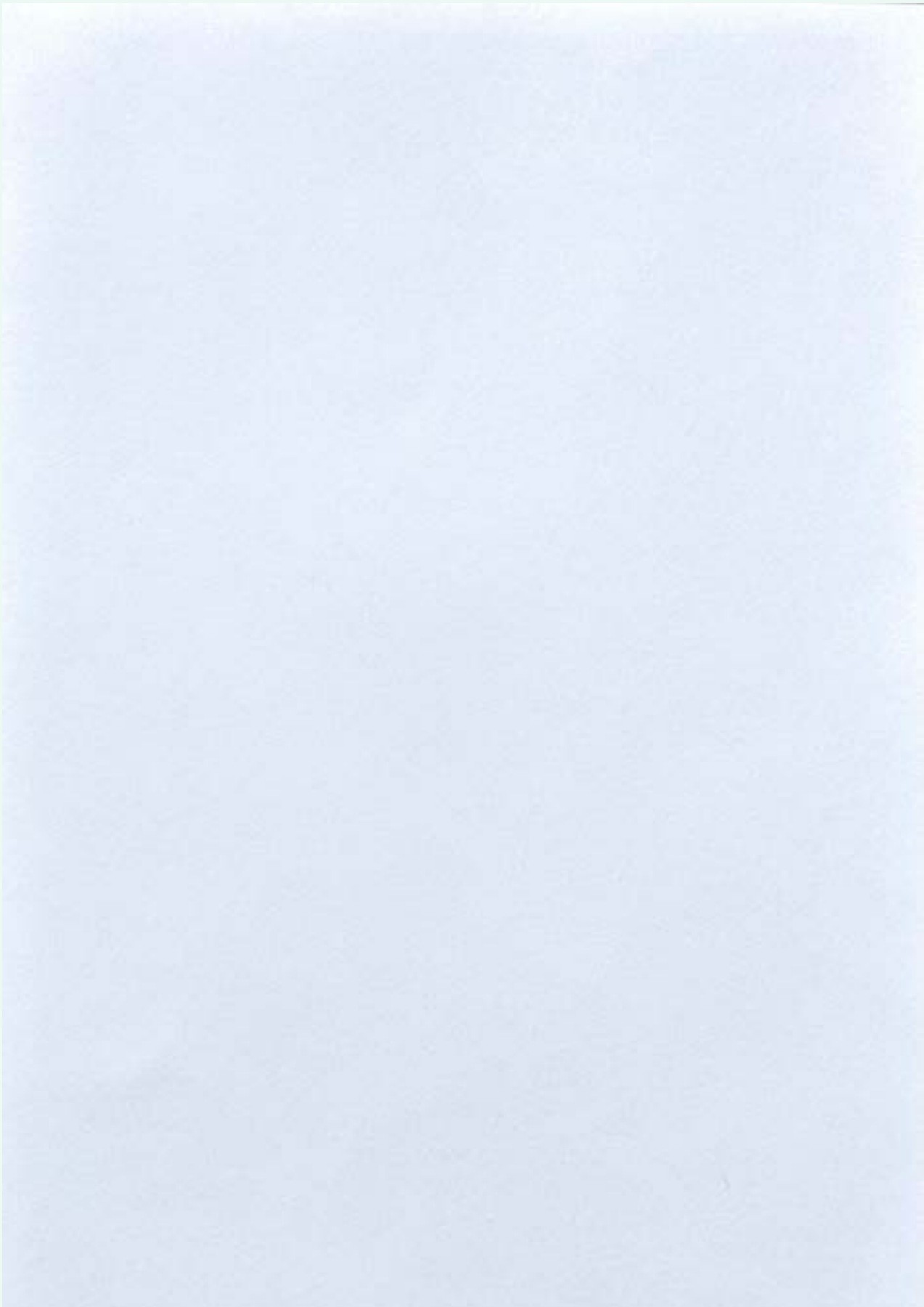
"The image I created describes the city of Thermi. I feel that we have the ability to be so close to nature and we get to spend much time outside. One of the places close to us is the Fragud Thermis, in which we have access to football, basketball, and tennis courts." - High school student



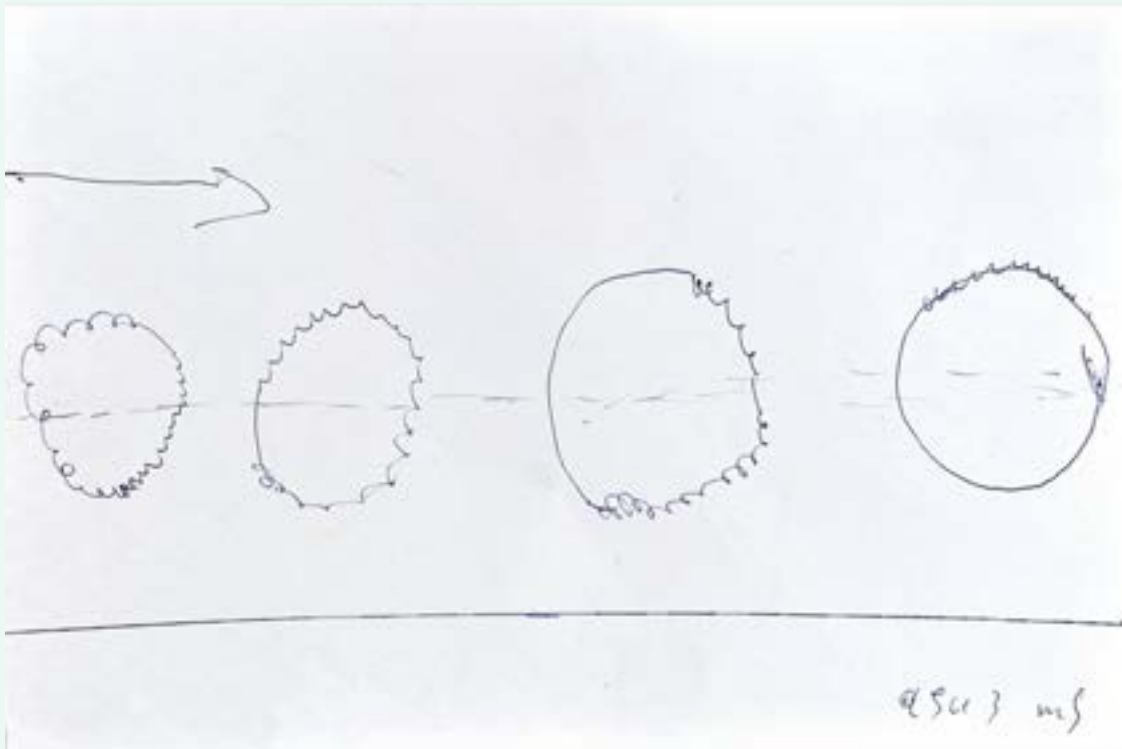
"It is a place in Thermi where there are bars where you can work out and there is nature around, trees busses and green more generally. There are buildings in front that are just built and destroys in my opinion the view." - High school student



"A place where friends can gather to spend their time in the afternoons with shops around to eat or take a walk around the park." - High school student



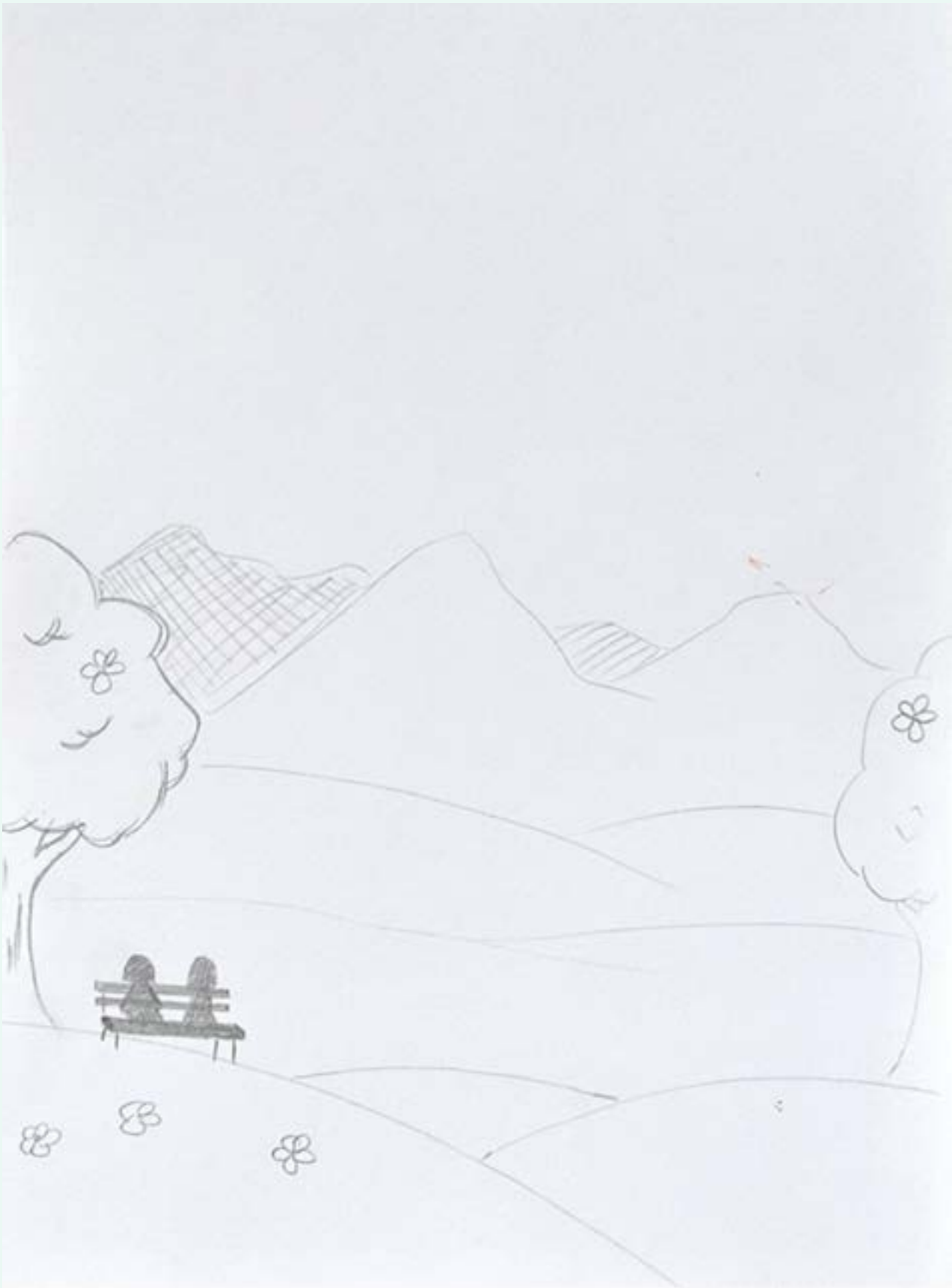
"I feel free here, because we know everybody and we are all friends in some way. I don't feel embarrassed to be myself when I go out. Everybody accepts me. We never judge each other." - High school student



"This painting represents the progress of the evolvement of Thermi over time using circles. The first circle is distorted symbolizing that there were many problems making this place not habitable for some humans. However, as we move on to the right side of the painting the circles start to get better and better symbolizing that progress has been made. This includes recycling programs and other stuff that didn't exist before. However, no circle is perfect and this symbolizes that there is still room for improvement." - High School Student



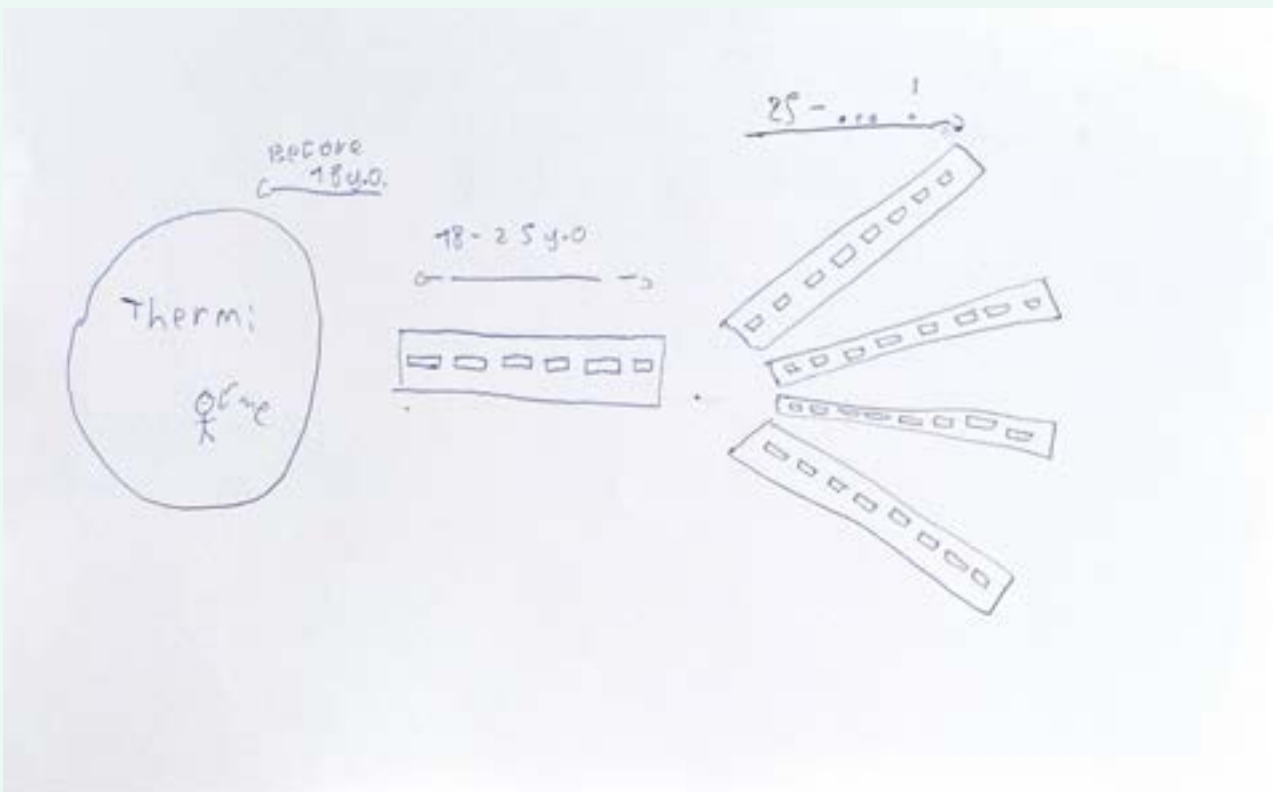
"It's better to live in suburb than a city. Too much CO2 and bad people. However it's cool." - High school student



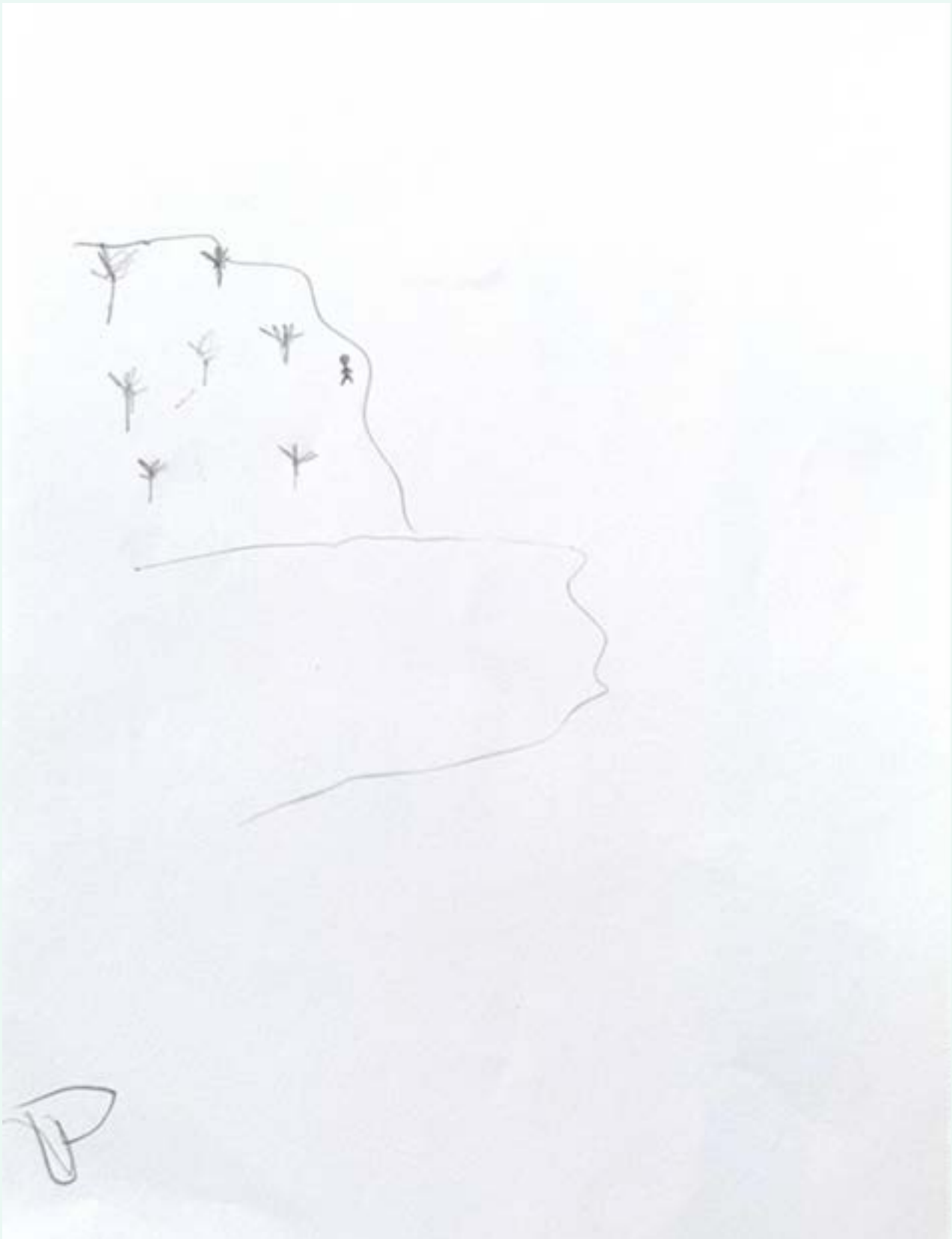
"I've drawn the countryside that we have in Thermi. It captures the time that I spend there with my friends." - High school student



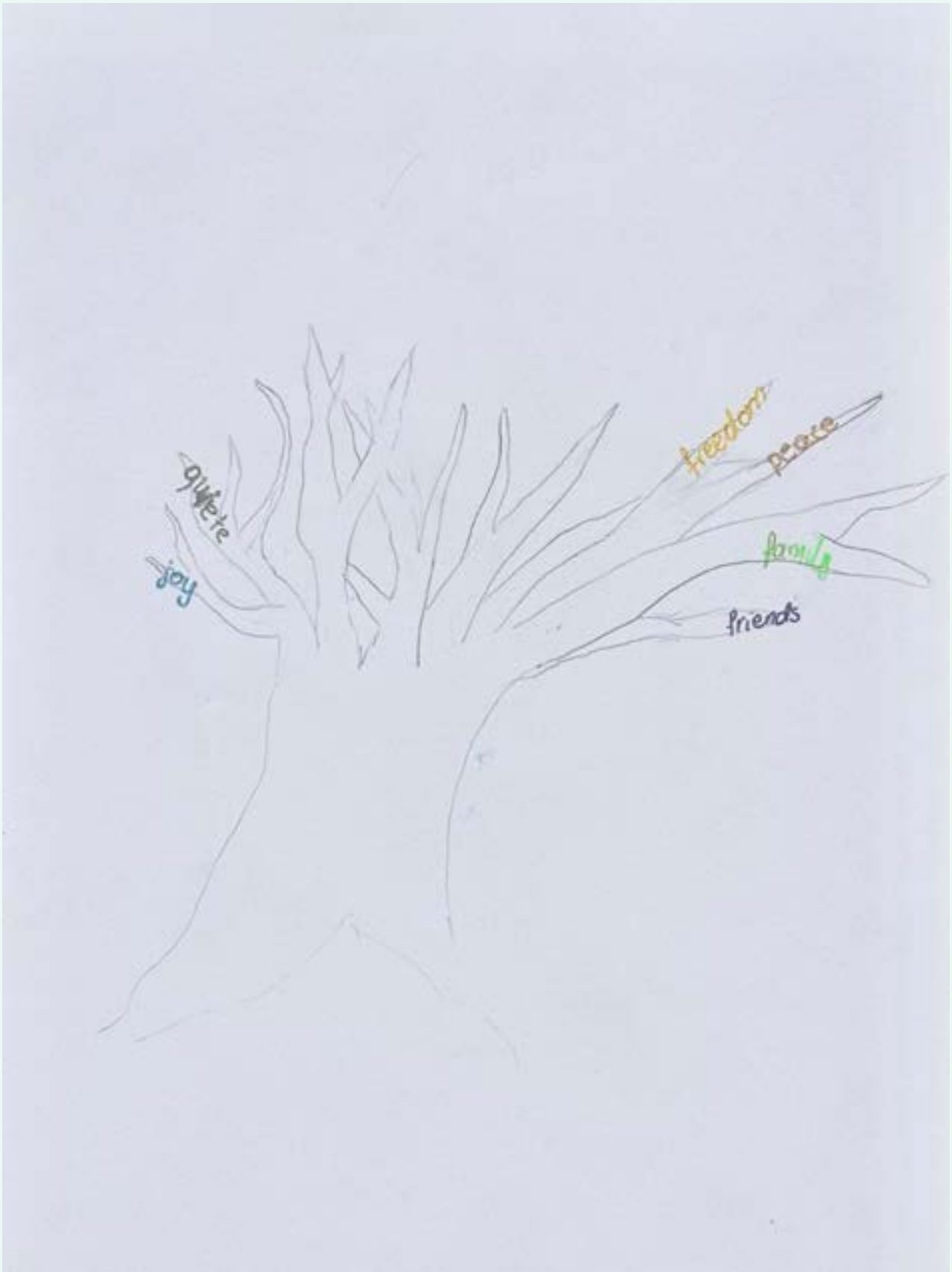
"I drew this because in Thermi there is now drugs and everyone is against their use especially in spot at New Raidestos. Spot is a group of people that fight against drugs every day." -High school student



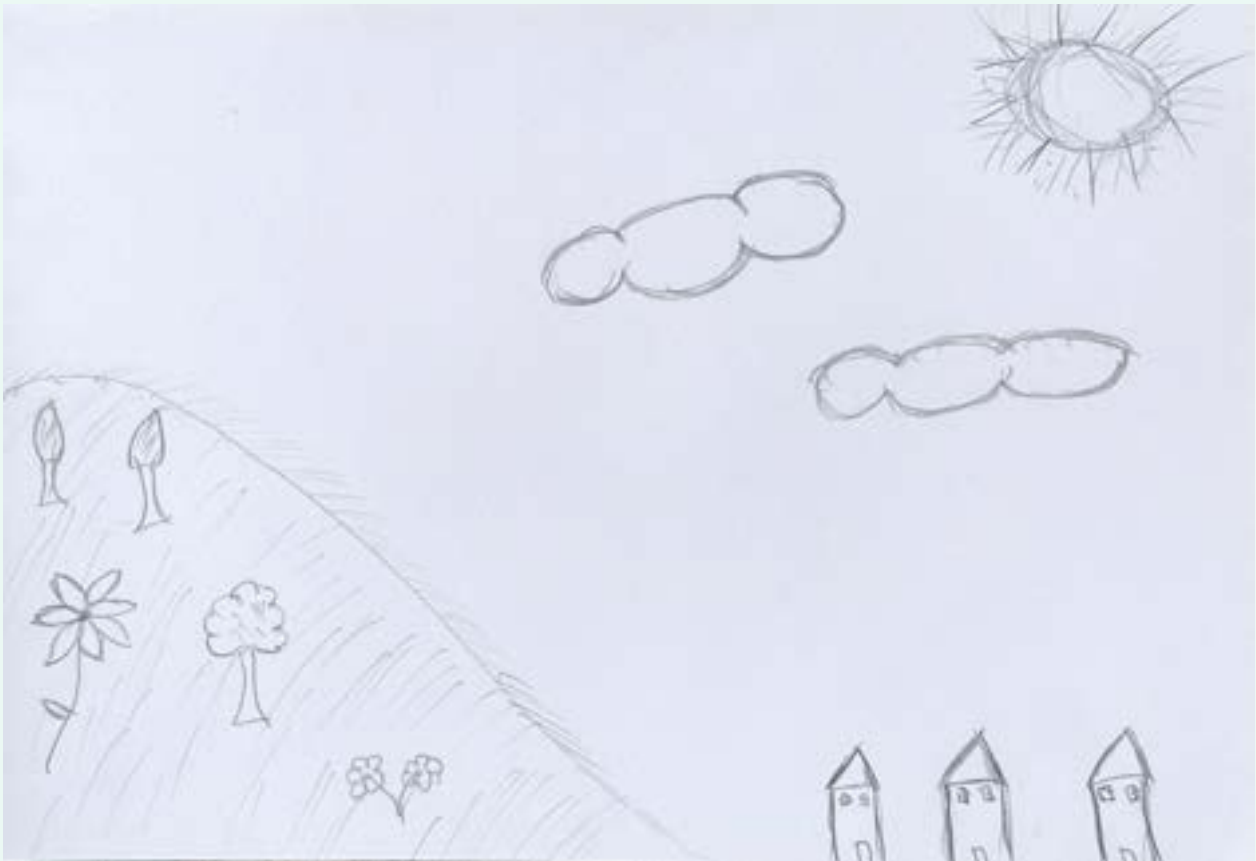
"I see Thermi as a restriction bubble leading me into a single path which for me is university, but after that I have already planned my future through work projects I'm already associated with. 18, 25: is arguably the age I'll be during the process." - High School Student



"Last summer I lost my speaker to this place and I had to chase it. This place makes me feel anxious." - High school student



No Caption



"I feel happy and free because I have the opportunity to be close to nature whenever I feel sad or tired." - High school student



"This drawing shows how I feel about living in the Municipality of Thermi. I like this place, because I can come in contact with the environment, as there is a lake near a village called Triadi and there is also a park where I can have a great time with my friends." - High school student



"This is an image of the lake near my house that brings me happiness and joy. I usually go jogging and enjoy the beautifulness of this landscape. I feel free here and communicate with my friends." - High school student



"I like living in the Municipality of Thermi, because it is close to nature. My paper depicts the natural beauty that Thermi has as I have painted the trees, the flowers, and a lake." - High school student